REV. A. E. TAVENER

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ASCENSION AND WHITSUNTIDE SERMONS

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

EASTER SERMONS
By Representative Preachers

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SERMONS
By Representative Preachers.

HARVEST THANKSGIVING SERMONS
By the Leading Preachers of the Church (*Second Impression*)

COMMUNION ADDRESSES
By Representative Preachers.

ASCENSION AND WHITSUNTIDE SERMONS

BY

REPRESENTATIVE PREACHERS

EDITED BY

FREDERICK J. NORTH

EDITOR OF "EASTER SERMONS," "ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SERMONS," "HARVEST THANKSGIVING SERMONS," "LIFE'S BEGINNINGS," "COMMUNION ADDRESSES," ETC.

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PREFACE

The very favourable reception accorded to the previous volumes in this series of sermons on the Great Festivals of the Church has encouraged the publishers to issue yet another. In the present instance the Ascension and Whitsuntide are the themes selected, and many of our best-known preachers have in the following pages proved how rich in helpful and suggestive thought are the incidents associated with these two outstanding festivals.

The publishers have reason to believe that this volume will be found of equal value and interest with those that have preceded it.

March, 1926.

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PART I

ASCENSION SERMONS

JESUS CHRIST IN GLORY

By E. A. Down, M.A.
Hon. Canon of Southwark

"*Received up into glory.*" 1 Tim. iii, 16

Jesus Christ in Glory

The Apostle, it has been thought, was quoting some early Christian hymn. This hymn was intended, apparently, to celebrate the glory of our Lord's divinity. The special fragment of it which St. Paul borrows here for the illustration of his argument, was meant to bring home to Timothy "in a precise and graphic manner the importance of that body of revealed truth by which our Christian devotion is sustained." God, he reminds him, had revealed Himself to mankind in human form. "God was manifest in the flesh." He had been proved and justified to our faith, as the Very and Eternal Son of God. "Justified in the Spirit." He had been "seen of angels," as "the Divine Wisdom and Goodness were unveiled to those heavenly hierarchies by the Incarnation of Jesus Christ." He had been heralded among the peoples of the Gentile world. "Preached among the nations." He had been "believed on" in a corrupt and faithless generation. And then finally He had been "received up" at His Ascension into that "glory" to which His human nature became

entitled through His voluntary submission to a cruel and shameful death.

Here, then, we have a short summary of those stupendous events which engage our attention during the Christian year, and which reach their climax on the Festival of our Lord's Ascension. The Great Forty Days were over—days which must have meant so much for those first disciples. The Master had not lived with them, indeed, in familiar intercourse as before, but there could no longer be any room for doubt as to the reality of His return from the grave. Proof, and more than sufficient proof, had been driven home upon the convictions of men who certainly had not expected His resurrection. He had been visibly present to their eyes ; He had been touched by human hands ; He had submitted to the most searching tests of incredulity ; He had spoken to them, breathed on them, displayed the sacred scars—and as they looked back upon their experience in after years, they had no hesitation in asserting that Jesus Christ "had shown Himself *alive* after His passion by many infallible proofs."

But now, at last, the purpose of those mysterious days had been accomplished. "It was expedient" for them, as well as for Himself, "that He should go away." The earthly presence must be withdrawn before it was possible for the disciples to "walk by faith and not by sight," and before they were in a position to win for themselves a

beatitude higher than that accorded to St. Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." It must have been a truth hard to realize; but our Lord's departure was truly a gain to the cause of Christ, as the Great "High Priest of our profession" now enters the Holy Place for the completion of His redemptive work, and sends down the Holy Spirit in order that the blessings of His finished sacrifice may be carried far beyond that little group of faithful people who had been trained up to be witnesses of all they had seen and heard.

And so He meets in Jerusalem for the last time with the disciples who were conscious (it may be) of the impending change. Last words are always solemn—the last words which fall from the lips of some dying friend; and we may be sure that this was an interview which must have deeply impressed itself upon the heart and memory of the Apostles. And then, when it was over, He leads them forth from the Upper Chamber, through the streets of Jerusalem, through the gate of the city over the brook Cedron, past the garden of Gethsemane, across the brow of the hill they had so often traversed, towards Bethany—through scenes hallowed by countless tender associations, and through spots consecrated by words and incidents so full of interest which subsequent events had now served to explain. At last they reach the appointed place, whether called Bethany or the Mount of

Olives. We can see the little band as they gather round the Master, still clinging so tenaciously to those old Messianic dreams which had inspired the enthusiasm of their early vocation. "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?"—followed by the gentle rebuke which bade them not seek to intrude on "the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power." Their thoughts must now be diverted from the contemplation of such mysterious questionings to the prospect of active duty, and they are given to understand that it is a very practical task, rather than a speculative temper, which lies before them. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." And then when the last words of farewell had been spoken, and as the hands were raised in blessing, that beloved form is carried away from them into Heaven. We can picture the disciples following Him with upturned eyes, eager to catch the last glimpses of One who had been more to them than everything else in the world, until "a cloud"—a cloud, we may surmise, of adoring angels—"received Him out of their sight."

"Received up into glory." Such is the simple story as it is unfolded in the New Testament—so simple that a child can understand it, and yet so profound that somehow among the festivals of the Incarnation there is none whose significance is so hard to realize. From long association, from the habits of our childhood, and from all the

familiar customs which have gathered round Christmas, we do not experience much difficulty in making the mystery of Bethlehem our own. There is an attractiveness about that homely story—the poor mother, and the foster-father seeking shelter for the divine Babe born into the world of His own creation in such abject poverty. Nothing, likewise, seems quite able to rob us of those impressions which the long years have stamped upon the sacred home at Nazareth—the obedience of the Holy Child, the carpenter's shop, the simple routine of toil and worship. It is all so like, and yet so different from, what we have to experience ourselves. Or we can picture Capernaum—the house of St. Peter, the fishermen with their boats, the publican's office, and the scenery of Gennesaret. Nay, more, so long and so often have we pondered over the story that even the Passion of our Redeemer has become almost a part of our very selves. We have appropriated, each in our own way, the details in that tragic drama until they have become indelibly fixed upon the imagination—the Cænaculum, Gethsemane, the trials, the indignity, the condemnation, the Way of Sorrows, the anguish, the darkness of Calvary, the dereliction, and the death. It may be that we have even formed our own conceptions of the Easter victory, though we know how mysterious it is ; but somehow when we pass on to the Ascension, it becomes so much harder to grasp its true bearing on our lives.

It is easy enough, no doubt, to picture the circumstances which marked our Lord's departure from earth, or even the triumphant welcome with which those myriad angels conducted His glorified humanity to its seat upon the Father's throne; but beyond this our imagination refuses to go, though this is precisely the point where it is most important for us to begin. The real truth is that we all find it so much harder to grasp the meaning of things which are taking place at the present time than of the things which have happened long years ago. Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capernaum, Jerusalem and Galilee, all represent to our minds certain historical facts which we have no wish to dispute; whereas that *now*, at this very moment while the outside world is pursuing its ordinary routine of work and pleasure, such stupendous events should be in progress, and which have so close and intimate a relation to ourselves—that is what we all find it so supremely difficult to assimilate. "The only true reality," it has been said, "that which at this moment all men ought to remember; the fact in which the whole world has a common interest . . . which affects every age, state, and country; which obtains for all an interval of trial, and a hope of pardon, is that the Son of God is even at this very moment at the right hand of the Father, pleading the merits of His death as the prevailing Intercessor for His brethren. And yet the transitory affairs of life

appear to us of such overwhelming importance ; the achievements of individuals, and the prosperity of nations occupy every thought ; and the tide of corrupt passion flows on in the very sight of heaven. . . . This is one of those cases in which to look at things invisible as an actual object, external to the mind, is so difficult. When we see the ordinary frivolity of man's life, we can hardly feel his condition and interests to be in reality of such serious import . . . while that things are daily going on around us by which our position and interests are actually affected—that Christ's intercession is truly taking place above, and that the ordinances of the Church are our means of participating in it—here are things which we cannot bring our imagination to admit." It is possible that a great many other thoughts were coursing through the Apostle's mind, but we may be quite sure that he certainly desired to emphasize nothing less than this all-important verity, when he reminded Timothy how our Saviour, after His work on earth was completed, had been " received up into glory."

There are, at any rate, just two things, in conclusion, of which this great Feast of the Ascension is especially calculated to remind us.

(1) The first is, that our Lord's redemptive work is still proceeding. It has become very usual among Christian people to lay such exclusive stress on those stupendous events which are described in the Gospels, that their sequel is

apt to be forgotten as it is so plainly disclosed in the remaining books of the New Testament. There can be no doubt whatever that those first disciples never looked upon our Lord's sacrificial work as over when the great offering on Calvary had been consummated; though the Cross constituted, of course, "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world," which could never be repeated. The merits of that atoning death, however, had to be both pleaded and applied so long as this present dispensation should continue to exist. That is the spectacle which formed the background of St. Stephen's vision when he beheld the Son of Man in glory, Jesus Christ in His human nature, "standing on the right hand of God." It was an element in the lesson which St. Paul had to learn on the Damascus road, when the heavenly voice proclaimed the identity of Jesus Christ with His Mystical Body in such a way that He could say, "Why persecutest thou *Me*?" It explains those passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews which describe our Lord as "a priest for ever," as "living to make intercession for" His brethren, or as "entering into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." That, likewise, is why St. John assures us that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"—a great truth which had been brought home to him in all its convincing fulness

as he gazed through the open door of Heaven and beheld " in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing as it had been slain." A real office, in fact, is still continually in progress above, since, in the words of St. Augustine, " The Father beholds the wounds of the Redeemer, and pardons the sins of the redeemed."

(2) And the other truth is this—that it helps us to understand the real logic and importance of the sacraments. These ordinances, viewed superficially, are such trifling things that people are sometimes tempted to deny the tremendous consequences which have been attributed to their faithful reception. A few drops of water poured upon an unconscious infant, simultaneously with the recital of some simple words—how can this constitute a change from darkness to light, from bondage to freedom, from the kingdom of Satan to the family of God ? Or the hands of a mortal man laid in blessing on the head, in conjunction with some prescribed syllables—what warrant have we for supposing that anything so ordinary should be the condition of receiving the Holy Ghost ? Some pieces of bread, and a little wine, sanctified by some mystic formula—how can this produce effects so remarkable as those which the Church ascribes to the Prayer of Consecration ? Our answer to such questions will largely depend upon our having learnt to realize what our Lord is doing *now*. Jesus

Christ is the only priest by His own inherent right—that is admitted by all Christians—but it is not everyone who has mastered the further fact that He has commissioned *men* to act as delegates for dispensing His gifts, and that the true value of all the ordinances of grace is vitally bound up with our Saviour's present work. Jesus Christ is the Priest in every sacred rite, as He stands behind the human minister acting in His Name ; and sacraments are only the certificated channels of His grace through which life and strength are poured into the members of His Body from their Head.

It was in the strength of this conviction that the Apostles could "return to Jerusalem with great joy." As they went back they found the world to be no blank and dreary place of separation, but a glorious field of new work and hope. The Master was nearer to them now than He had ever been before, and the Ascension turned out to be their gain rather than a loss. It was only "a cloud" which hid Him from their sight and ours—a cloud which the eye of faith can pierce, the voice of prayer can penetrate, and the affections of man's heart can disperse. If it hides His presence from *our* gaze, it does not hide us from *His*. Behind the veil He still continues to watch our work, to intercede, to encourage, to sanctify and bless ; and it is that thought alone which can inspire us in dark hours, enrich our life with a new purpose, serve

as a wholesome restraint when temptation presses or duty is hard, and prepare us for the blessed hour when clouds shall be rolled away for us to see Him as He is.

THE ETERNAL WORLD

By W. R. Inge, C.V.O., D.D.
Dean of St. Paul's

"*Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me, for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.*"—John xvii, 24.

The Eternal World

Throughout the High Priestly prayer, as it is called, our Lord speaks of Himself as though He were already in heaven. "Now I am no more in the world," He says. In St. John's Gospel past, present and future flow into each other. He lifts us up into a world where time and change are not. In an earlier chapter we read (the words are put into the mouth of Christ Himself), "No man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who *is* in heaven." The Son of Man is in heaven, even while He is on earth. Heaven, then, cannot be another place, for no one can be in two places at once. Heaven is not a place towards which one could fly in an aeroplane. It will never appear in any map of the stars. No telescope will ever discover it. What then is it? It is the environment in which eternal life is lived. It is the home of blessed spirits, who have been borne "far beyond this bourne of time and place." It is the abode of God, whose centre is everywhere and His circumference nowhere. It has nothing to do with

geography or astronomy. It is a spiritual not a physical reality. It is unseen to us, not because we are too far off to see it, but because it belongs to the order of "things invisible to mortal sight."

We commemorate to-day the passing away of the incarnate Christ into this unseen world. He is nearer to us than ever. He said to Mary Magdalene, "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father." Now that He has ascended, we can all touch Him, whether we live in Palestine or Western Europe, in America or Australia. He is with us always, even to the end of the world; but we cannot see Him.

Now what are the grounds on which we believe in this invisible, spiritual, eternal world? Science can tell us nothing about it. No ingenious instruments, no mathematical calculations, no chemical analysis, is of the slightest use. Some foolish people think that the study of ghost stories and spectral apparitions may lead to some positive result. It is a great mistake. Even if the objective reality of such apparitions could be proved, and it cannot, such evidence has no value when we are seeking to establish spiritual facts. The more solid the ghost, the more certain it would be that it belonged to the phenomenal order only. I hope you will refuse to have anything to do with these superstitions, even when they are appealed to by learned men who should know better.

The Eternal World

There can be no physical evidence for the spiritual world. There are only three forms under which matter can exist—solid, liquid and gaseous ; and disembodied spirits belong to none of them.

Is it then by philosophy that we arrive at our belief in the spiritual world ? To some extent, yes. I mean that the inadequacy and self-contradictoriness of any materialist explanation of the Universe can be and often has been demonstrated. Philosophy can assure us that there must be an eternal background to this ever-shifting scene of change and growth and decay. But it is one thing to admit that there must be an eternal world, and another to have a living faith that there is one. This living faith is the most precious possession of the human race. It has come to us gradually, as mankind struggled upwards towards the light. It is, to a large extent, postulated and assumed in all the nobler activities of human beings. Who would give his life for a cause, an idea—for his country, for example—if he believed that the only solid realities are the things that we can see and touch, and that we ourselves are nothing more than our bodies composed of carbonic acid and other ingredients, which a bullet may resolve again into their component elements ? If there is no eternal spiritual world, beauty and knowledge and goodness and love are mere phantoms of the imagination, and it is impossible to guess how

such phantoms come to be perceived. Every human life, however degraded, has many inklings of immortality. But the truth is revealed clearly to only a few—the good and wise and holy in each generation. What we call religion is faith, hope and love raised to a higher activity, acting and energizing "under the form of eternity." "It is only religion which has furnished man with a vivid and concrete experience and conviction of permanent ethical and spiritual value" (Von Hügel).

And there is this great difference between the philosophical proof of eternal life and the religious experience of it. The philosopher often seems to give us light without colour. He points to a heaven which, like the face of Tennyson's heroine, is "faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null," a vision of beautiful, motionless forms, like Greek marble statues, which are only spoilt if they are brought down into this bustling, changing world. "Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass, stains the white radiance of eternity."

But when the religious man has a vision of heaven, it is of a heaven full of colour and movement. It is a heaven of which earth is the shadow, the faithful copy, though full of confusion and imperfection. The first book of the Bible tells us that man was made in the image of God. This does not mean, of course, that God has a shape like ours, but that we and all God's

creatures have a life derived from Him and in various degrees like His own. And in proportion as we really understand the world we live in, in proportion as we come to know the true meaning and values of the things which surround us and occupy our daily attention, we see the divine hand and the divine purpose at work in them ; we long to escape from the mere accidents and delusive aspects of them, and to see them as God sees them. This is why all the greatest and best of the human race—all God's saints—are filled with an unquenchable thirst after the eternal world, and why they—and not only they but most of us—feel an intolerable pain at the very idea of being entirely confined to what has no permanency, no value beyond itself—to what comes and goes and then is as though it had never been. If this thirst, and this pain, are strongest in the highest characters, in those whose spiritual life is fullest and richest, we must conclude that they have their roots in reality. "My soul is athirst for God, yea even for the living God." We cannot all use this language sincerely, but we know that the best men and women can ; and who can have implanted this longing in them but God Himself ?

There is one point about this longing for heaven—for life in the immediate presence of God—which I wish to emphasize, because it is often missed. There are many thinkers who tell us that what we feel is the gradual and painful

coming to self-consciousness of spirit in the making—as if God Himself were gradually realizing Himself in the human mind. But this is emphatically not what the religious experience affirms about itself. When we long to come nearer to God, we are not struggling to make real something which is not yet real, but only an ideal. We are struggling to get nearer to an already realized Perfection—to come into the presence of a Reality other and higher than ourselves. God is not an ideal, but the supreme fact. Heaven is not an imaginary goal, a world whose margin fades for ever and for ever as we move. It is there already—a " place " prepared for us, our home ready to welcome us when we can find it. Religion calls us therefore not to aspirations only, but to adoration. The error of which I am speaking would deprive us of just that—of adoration, which is the central act of all true religion.

Heaven is wherever Christ is, and Christ has not left us orphans ; He is with us and among us. And yet assuredly we are not in heaven yet. We see through a glass darkly; we are tied and bound by the chain of our sins. We are the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

Eternal life already begun and truly known in part here, but fully to be achieved and truly understood hereafter ; that is what corresponds to the deepest longings of man's spirit, and to the

clearest thoughts of his mind. And this is what Christianity teaches. It is the substance of the beautiful Collect which the Church puts into our mouths on Ascension Day.

LIFE TRIUMPHANT

By Norman Maclean, D.D.
St. Cuthbert's Parish Church, Edinburgh

"*I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father.*" St. John xvi. 28.

Life Triumphant

No part of the sacred record is more veiled in mystery than that of the final scene of the Risen Life of our Lord. It is only in the spirit of deepest humility that we can approach the contemplation of an event that so transcends the limits of human reasoning. Before we approach it we may well pause and think of the mystery of the universe that enfolds us. Think for a moment of the infinite spaces strewn with millions of worlds with their intricacies and beauties so incomprehensible ; of the baffling mystery of life ; of the 400 million years it took to build up the world before man appeared. . . and then with the mind saturated with awe, what can man do but kneel and confess his ignorance ? Only these poor victims of modern teaching who have not been taught to realize how small the sum of knowledge is, will ever cavil at what they do not understand. " I have come to believe so many strange things because of experience, that I see no reason to doubt the truth of things beyond my experience." And if we steep our minds in the realization of the illimitableness of God's universe, and

of our own poor gropings in the dark, then, on the Mount of Ascension, as we hear the call of Pilate, centuries old, *Behold the Man*, we shall realize that this last scene is the most natural, the most inevitable of all the wondrous story. "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father." Where else could He go? If this spirit was truly and absolutely Divine, that He should go at last to the Divine source was of all things the most inevitable.

I

It was inevitable that the appearances of the Master should come to an end, and that His disciples should realize that they had come, in that form, to an end; and that realization could only come in a last farewell scene such as the evangelists record. We shall realize this if we ask what was the purpose of these manifestations of Himself to His disciples during the forty days.

It was to convince them that the gospel that He had preached—that gospel of the Divine renewal—had not ended in the frustration of the agony of Calvary. He could only convince them of that by making them certain of the fact that He was still alive; that His enemies might slay the body but that they were powerless against His spirit; that no stone rolled to the

entrance of a tomb, and no seal set thereon, and no soldiers of Cæsar's on guard, could imprison the spirit.

Just think how difficult it was to do that. It is difficult still. The loved one who has entered within the veil, into the fulness of life, sees those he loved on earth bewailing his fate, and he wants to convince them that there is nothing to bewail, nothing to groan over, that he has exchanged the shadow for the substance ; and the task of convincing them is often impossible, because he has entered on a different life, the life of the spirit ; and they are still on the lower plane, imprisoned in sense, incapable of conceiving life except in corporate form. Often there must come to those who have passed hence a sense of bafflement ; they see themselves mourned as dead and lo, they thrill with the fulness of life ; and they cannot pass through the walls of the senses the message of assurance that they live. Only at rare times when our spirits are unloosed from the thralldom of the body, and our souls become receptive, can they make us feel that they are not really dead.

The difficulty the Risen Lord had to overcome was just that. The Master had to convince these poor, slow learners in the school of the Spirit that the Cross is not the end. He, too, had to wait the opportunity. He could only communicate with them when their souls were

receptive. You will find that plainly set forth in the narrative.

To Mary, scarcely conscious of the body, by reason of her grief, raised to the plane of emotional spiritual agony, with the cry, "They have taken away my Lord," He appears and says, Mary! He makes His appeal to the hearing of the ear. She was in the psychic state when the impression could be conveyed.

To the disciples assembled in Jerusalem, with panic in their hearts, trembling at every sound in the street, feeling that their only hope is in God, in the spiritual state in which the faith of one becomes the faith of all, He appears and says, Peace, and He makes them see His wounds. He makes the appeal to the seeing of the eye! He appeals to every sense. "Reach hither thy hand." He makes them realize that there is something beyond touch. His spirit still bears the scars of all the experiences and agonies He underwent, and He is still a living Personality. Everybody knows the strange effect of morning and evening; when the light suddenly emerges, and the soul feels the mystery of the dawn. There on the shores of the lake they were in the pyschic state, in which they could receive . . . and He appears. They see and hear. "It is the Lord," they whisper one to the other. It is only now that man has set himself to explore the mystery of his subliminal self. . . . And all this wondrous story which

once to our ignorance appeared incredible, becomes order, and certainty, and inevitability. . . . There was no other way but just this by which these men would have the fact borne in on their minds and hearts that Jesus was still alive, and that He was with them.

But once they were convinced of that, it is apparent also that His appearances had to come to an end; if they did not then they would become dependent on the occasional appearance of their Lord ; they would mistake the seeing of the eye and the visible manifestation for the essence of religion which is the invisible and indwelling spirit. That the occasional presence might become the perpetual presence ; that they might rise to the height of the words, " I am with you not only in the garden, or in the room where you assemble, or on the shore after you have laboured in vain — but with you always," these appearances had to come to an end, and they had to realize they had come to an end. And it is for this that He led them out as far as Bethany ; and bade them farewell, and was parted from them—a veiling cloud of impenetrable mystery receiving Him out of their sight. In the record there is nothing to offend our intelligence. The progress of human knowledge justifies the beautiful story. Every event marches to the predestined end and marches inevitably. They slew Him and in so doing they only set free His spirit from bodily restric-

tions ; and the spirit, still in the form of His transfigured and glorified Personality, rises from the plane of sense, that He may fill all things. It is because He thus ascended that He to-day is everywhere present, the quickening power of the life divine.

II

Not only was the final departure of the Lord inevitable as an event in the process of the transformation of His influence from the realm of sense to the realm of the spirit—an event that necessarily had its place in the development of the spiritual life of His disciples—but it was still more inevitable when we think of the Personality of Jesus.

Let us recall what that Personality was. His own words are clarity itself : " I came forth from the Father and am come into the world." The words vibrate with the consciousness of the greatness of His own Person. His was the most unique Personality that ever lived on earth. It is but the simple truth that all life can only have one source ; and in that sense every man can say : " I came forth from the Father." But the words on the lips of Christ have a higher meaning. We realize that when we hear Him say : " I and the Father are One." He did not mean that the whole of the Godhead abode in Him. No thoughtful

person could ever think that the Creator of all this immeasurable universe dwelt in the weakness of a little child, in all the fulness of power and majesty. Jesus never meant that ; for He said also : " My Father is greater than I."

Wherein did it then consist—this unique relationship with the Father ? His identity with the Father was identity of spirit. Any good son can say of his father, I follow my father's example. I submit to do his will ; I live according to his spirit ; I make his ideals my own. It is in that sense that Jesus says : " I and the Father are one." Its oneness is that of love and sympathy and fellow feeling ; a oneness that enables the Son to say, Not My will but Thine be done. And as one reads the beautiful story of that God-possessed life filled with the Spirit of the Father, breathing the Father's tenderness and love of men, giving that love the fulness of expression in loving even to death, the conviction deepens that such a life could not end in shameful buffeting, in decay, or extinction. A life filled with the Spirit of the Father inevitably must return to the Father. " I leave the world and go to the Father." And as we see that farewell and that return as with uplifted hands He goes forth, we can say : Here is a life going home to its true sphere—back whence it came—even to the Father. It is not the quantity of the Divine in Jesus that

is of importance. It is the quality of the Spirit that matters.

III

This return of Jesus Christ to the Father from the Mount of Ascension is to us a fact of supreme importance when we relate it to our own lives. For it is the visualization of the onward progress of humanity and of the splendour of our ultimate destiny. We at times get oppressed with the sense of life's futility and emptiness. The animal in us degrades and vulgarizes. We are in the midst of a world which is evidently bent on committing suicide. We hear the Divine voice saying : Love one another and be at peace, and even those who name the sacred Name fill the earth with their striving—crucifying the Lord afresh and putting Him to open shame. We feel at times that any destiny would be good enough for creatures such as we are—driftwood on the shore of eternity. But we hear the summons ring out as it did of old, "Behold the Man," and we stand to gaze, and lo, with the scars of conflict, victorious, we see Him return to the Father. He is the Man that God means us to be. A destiny like that awaits us too. Nor can we find any reason to doubt it. We have only to think of the marvellous progress man has made to realize that that progress will inevitably go on to its predestined end. When we think of

that marvellous growth we are filled with amazement. Who could imagine that atoms and cells could grow at last into a man and come to the hour when :

> Some strange light past knowing, past control,
> Rose in his eyes and shone and was a soul.

Often it looked as if he would perish ; but the seed divine was in him and nothing could stay his growth. The sea dweller became the cave dweller and then the slum-dweller. But not even that could quench his spirit. Time and again inflows of the Divine came to him. He became the man of Nazareth, He conquered the earth and grasped the stars. What chasms man has overstepped. Think of the bushman in Australia unable to count beyond five, and of the mind and soul of Shakespeare. What marvellous progress man has made.

And that progress is just beginning. Man is only of yesterday in the history of the Universe. He is yet in his infancy. The Church of Christ is still in its early days. And if the progress of man has, in the past, been so great, who can forecast his ultimate destiny ? The centuries to come will show a progress such as man never yet dreamed of. . . .

And of that progress to which time can set no bounds nor death stay, the Ascension is the symbol and the seal. The Son of Man as we hear Him say " I leave the world and go to

the Father," and as we see Him setting forth on the last journey in quiet majesty, is but a faint image of that last goal, which : " Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor has entered the mind of men to think the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." O Lord Jesus, ascending far above all principalities and powers, we worship and adore.

IV

The effect which the Ascension of Jesus produced on the disciples is recorded thus : " They returned to Jerusalem with great joy." It was for them a sunrise and not a sunset. They went forth to the ends of the earth with the flaming consciousness that the Lord was with them and that nothing could stand against them.

And it is with that sort of joyousness that I desire to close. If that infant Church that seemed impotent in its weakness, confronted by the might of a world-empire all hostile, could rejoice, how infinitely greater our joy ! What confronts us is but a trifle compared to what confronted them. To us, because we lack the historic imagination, our own position seems grave and perilous. The world, obsessed with greed and pleasure, no longer deems it even worth its while to harass or persecute the Church. It only treats it with contempt. Even those who name the Holy Name are strangely lukewarm

and indifferent, like people who have strayed in a mist, and they throw the dead mass of their inertia in the way of every campaign to which the Lord calls His Church. So that the half-dead within its pale are the Church's deadliest foes, and not the pagans without.

What we need, in our hour of depression, is to go on pilgrimage to the Mount of Ascension and there realize that we can possess our soul in quietness and in confidence. Our Lord lives, and the dynamic source of the Church's life and power is within the veil. Another world encloses us—that realm of the Spirit, unseen, in which now He reigns. The armies of the unseen no man can compute. They, too, have risen and returned to the Father and have enforced the hosts of the living God. The Church on earth is but a tiny fraction—the advance guard of that mighty host that goeth forth to conquer.

In a great hour in this nation's history, Canning declared that he had called in a new world to redress the balance of the old. That is what Jesus did on the Mount of Ascension in the realm of the soul. He visualized on earth the New World of spiritual power, and through this open door, with the touch of the Lord beyond the gateway, we behold the spiritual array no earthly power can at last withstand. We have but to summon that power to our side, and nothing can prevail against us.

If only the vision of the Ascended Lord will this day arise on our mist-dimmed eyes ; if only we hear His words : " I leave the world and return to the Father " ; and if we only realize that that return of His was the way by which His Spirit and Power are broadcast everywhere—then we too, this day, will return to our homes—even to our Jerusalem—with great joy.

It only needs receptivity, willingness to receive, to turn our feeble striving into irresistible power and glorious victory.

THE ASCENSION AS ILLUMINATIVE OF OUR LORD'S CHARACTER

By George H. Morrison, D.D.
Glasgow

"*The day in which He was taken up.*"—Acts i, 2.

The Ascension as illuminative of Our Lord's Character

There is a strange and often-noticed silence hanging over the fact of the Ascension. It occupies but a little place in Scripture. One would have thought that an event like this would have had a large place assigned to it in Scripture. It was so wonderful—so awe-inspiring—that we should have looked for fullest recognition. Yet as a matter of fact out of the four evangelists *two* do not mention the Ascension, and in the literature of the earliest Church we hear but little of it. The argument from silence, as men call it, is always a somewhat shaky argument. A man may know a thing, and know it thoroughly, though he may not happen to mention it in speech —and so we believe it was with the evangelists. For them the thrilling fact was not ascension. For them the thrilling fact was resurrection. It was the resurrection that had changed the world for them, and turned their weeping into joy. And it is when we remember that—how the resurrection dominated everything—that we cease to be perplexed unduly at the comparative ignoring of all else. To the evangelists, the ascension

was but the completion of the resurrection. It was implied in it. It was inherent in it. It was its necessary and inevitable consequence. They were so moved with the amazing fact that their Lord was risen from the dead, that all else was subordinate and secondary.

Now if the ascension be a real experience, however parabolic be its vesture, there is one thing we are likely to discover. Everything that a man does bears a certain imprint of himself. All great actions are a revelation—a revelation of the character. We should therefore expect to find in the ascension certain traits or features of our Lord that have grown familiar in His ministry. Were this hour out of keeping with His nature we should immediately write it down as legendary. We should ascribe it to the ardour of the Church brooding on a Saviour who had vanished. On the other hand, if in this closing scene we find the very Jesus we have known before, it reinforces and establishes our faith. Let me then point out to you some of the notable features of this scene, that you may see how typical they are of everything that we have learned of Christ.

I would notice first in the ascension the blending of memory and hope.

The scene of the ascension is described to us by two names of very tenderest memory. We are told it happened on the brow of Olivet. We are told it happened close to Bethany. Olivet and Bethany—what memories do these

two names recall to every one of us. How they are interwoven for ever with the lights and shadows of our Saviour's life. His hours of purest and of truest happiness—His seasons of unutterable sorrow—are associated with Bethany and Olivet. Here He had rested in the village home where love was beautiful and faith was true. Here, far from the madding crowd, He had known the restfulness of being understood. Here had He proved the mighty power of God in raising Lazarus from the dead. Here had He agonized amid the olive-trees. Memories exquisitely tender—memories bitter as the taste of death—how they clambered like the wandering eglantine, and interwove themselves beside the road; memories of Martha and Mary—memories of Judas and his kiss—memories of crowds who cried Hosanna, and of disciples who had forsaken Him and fled. I hold that it is not a scene like this, which imagination would have chosen. It would have chosen some solitary spot amid the eternal solitudes of nature. It would have gone to the mountain of Transfiguration—to what Shakespeare calls some heaven-topping hill—to some far spot where human traffic reaches not, and where beyond these voices there is peace.

But with all that tenderest and saddest memory, and this is the point I ask you to observe, right through the heart of the ascension narrative there runs a thrilling and exultant hope. The ascension was a final parting. It was a last—

it was a long farewell. We should have looked for bitterness of tears there, such as we all have known when parting came. This was an hour above all human hours when we think of the words of our own poet: had we

> "never met and never parted,
> We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

Instead of that, what is this we read? They returned with gladness to Jerusalem. Ye shall receive power from on high. Ye shall be witnesses for Me through all the world. That hour of parting with all its tender memories was an hour of exultancy and burning hope. It was big with promise for the world.

Now I venture to assert that no one ever could have invented that. And the wonder deepens when you recall to mind that it is all supremely typical of Christ. Cast back your thought over the life of Christ—over the greatest hours of His story—and you find that blending of memory and hope to be characteristic of them all. Not so many weeks before, for instance, He had sat at the last supper with His own. He had partaken of many a supper with them—*this* one was the last. And it stands out from all the other suppers just in its blending of memory and hope—remember the Lord's death until He come. *That*, the last supper among many suppers. *This*, the last parting among many partings. And in both of them the tender backward glance,

and then the rapture of the forward view. My brother, that is Christ. That is the Lord, whom we have known. He is the same on the ascension morning as when He sat at supper with His own.

I notice next that in the ascension we have the blending of majesty and lowliness.

That there is majesty in this ascension scene I think nobody will dispute. It is, "as the greatest only are," in its simplicity sublime. Whether we have learned aught of the Crucified or not from the attempts of painters to portray Him is a question that I shall not press, though one may sometimes be inclined to doubt. But I know no painting by the greatest master that has not failed, and lamentably failed, to give to the ascension that sublimity which breaks upon us from the Scripture story. He blessed them and He was parted from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. One moment He was there and praying for them ; and the next He was not, for God took Him. One feels that heaven is near, and God is present, and all eternity is stooping down—and that is beyond all painters to portray. There are things that we cannot express even in music. They awe us, and in their presence we are dumb. We hear the cry come ringing down the ages, "Be still, and know that I am God." And that is how we feel at the ascension.

And yet the strange thing is that blended with this majesty is a lowliness which is exquisitely

beautiful. It was a scene as different as night from day from the scene of the translation of Elijah. There was a scene that might affright the bravest. Here the atmosphere was one of rest. There were horses and chariots of fire. Here was nothing but a cloud. There was a spectacle that would attract the gaze, so that every ploughman in the fields would stand aghast. Here was something that Bethany knew nothing of, though Bethany was but a little space away. A scene of grandeur inconceivable—and yet how little was the stir it made. Nobody knew of it save a few humble followers. It did not cry aloud that summer morning. The birds were singing, and the children playing, and the vineyard dressers going forth to labour—and at their very hand the Lord was going home.

Again I would assert that this is not a scene man would invent. It would never have occurred to anybody to unite this majesty and quiet lowliness. And the wonder deepens as we call to mind that this is the very union we discover as we go back in thought over the life of Christ. Here He is leaving earth to go to Heaven. Do you recall the hour when He came to earth? Is there nothing in that birth at Bethlehem that reminds you of the hour of the ascension? In both the open heaven, and the angels, and the feeling that eternity is near: in both a lowly quiet that is beautiful. No sudden earthquake shook the inn at Bethlehem.

No blaze of glory flashed upon its darkness. Men sat and chatted in the inn that night, not knowing what was happening at their hand. And so on Olivet the toiler stooped, and the women rose to their labours of the day, and knew not what sublimity was there. Again I say, that is Christ. That is the mark and token of the Lord. He is the same on Olivet as He had been in Bethlehem, the King of Kings, and yet the meek and lowly. Let Elijah have his fiery chariot. There is no fiery chariot for Christ. In Nazareth—in Galilee—on Olivet—He will not strive nor cry.

Lastly, I notice that in the ascension we have the blending of disclosure and reserve.

In the gradual teaching of our Lord there is one feature which arrests us. With ever increasing clearness He informed His hearers that soon He was going home to God. As the shadows deepened, and the cross came nearer, He grew very pitiful for His disciples. He saw what an awful hour that would be when He departed and they were left alone. And so with all the compassion of a mother He began to tell them of His coming glory, and of the offices He would exercise in Heaven. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. In My Father's house are many mansions. I go unto My Father and to your Father. I go to prepare a place for you. With such words of comfort and of love He sought to mitigate

their coming sorrow, when they would look for Him, and look for Him in vain. Cannot you picture how on Ascension morning these words would leap to their memories again? Taught by their loneliness they would recall them, and recalling them would know where He was gone. That hour of parting was an hour of learning. It was an hour of disclosure for their hearts. Heaven was a different place for the disciples after the ascension of their Lord.

And yet with that disclosure what a wonderful blending of reserve. Trembling on the very verge of heaven, there follows—but a cloud. They knew that heaven was not far away from them, for they had been taught that heaven was within them. They knew that the Father was not an absent deity, for "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." And yet in that hour when their Lord went home, and every disclosure was on the point of crowning, they looked and lo! there was nothing but a cloud. No Father's face—no palace beautiful—no feet of the shining ones beside the river—no many mansions gleaming in the light—no leaves for the healing of the nations; only a cloud—something they could not penetrate—something that hung its folds about the glory—and Christ was gone, and they were left alone, and the wind was blowing quietly across Olivet. Here was an hour that made heaven real; here

an hour that made heaven dark. Here was disclosure for Christ had spoken of it; here was a mystery impenetrable. Here was a new life for them in an ascended Saviour, and they were glad and hopeful and exultant. Here was what their eyes could never pierce.

And as they dwelt on that, in the quiet waiting of their after days, I think that it must have come to them with power that this was indeed the signature of Jesus. They had known Him; they had loved Him. He had been their leader; He had been their Light. He had disclosed to them such truth and beauty that everything had become different for them. Yet always in His presence there was mystery, and something in their Lord they could not fathom, and when they sought to find Him out by searching, lo! He had been hidden in a cloud. The great Revealer of love and truth and Fatherhood, He had stood in Galilee behind the veil. There was something in Him that was beyond their fathoming—something they could neither probe nor penetrate. And on Olivet on Ascension morning I look at that figure and know it is the Christ, whom they had loved long since and lost awhile.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OUR LORD'S ASCENSION

By W. J. Sparrow Simpson, D.D.
Hon. Canon of Chelmsford

"*He, because He abideth for ever, hath His priesthood unchangeable. Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.*—Hebrews vii, 24, 25.

The Significance of Our Lord's Ascension

The Ascension has of recent years much attracted the critics. They are greatly exercised to know precisely how it happened, its bearings on gravitation and space, and the locality of the world of spirits. But if the Ascension is essentially a symbolical representation to human senses of certain great ideas, it is singularly unfortunate to exhaust our energies in criticizing the method while failing to appreciate what the symbolism was intended to teach. If the actual form of the Ascension is an attempt to express intellectual values by spacial metaphors, we shall be well advised to pay some attention to the substance and ideas thereby suggested. The Ascension, like the Rainbow, was a temporary sign, but what is signified in both cases may well be a permanent possession. Let us turn our attention, therefore, to the doctrine of the Ascension, and endeavour to see a little of what it really means.

I

The Ascension of Christ into Heaven represents *exaltation and glory*.

According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."* He is "set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens."† "This Man after He had offered one sacrifice for sins sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."‡

These sentences grouped together from different parts of the Epistle agree in representing the Ascension as the glorifying of the Son of Man. The right hand of God, where He is described as seated, is a metaphor for the Divine glory, the state of majesty which He who made the worlds has now resumed after the interval of His stupendous condescension.

And that our Lord is seated or enthroned represents exaltation, triumph and rest. It draws the sharpest possible contrast between His heavenly experience now and His earthly experience in the days of His humiliation.

It is probably true that this aspect of the Ascension is what has become the general and popular view. Among ourselves in the English Church it has been largely promoted by the language of the Apostles' Creed. To say "He ascended into Heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence

* i, 3. † viii, 1. ‡ x, 12-14.

He shall come to judge the quick and the dead," does certainly suggest by its exclusive reference to the heavenly session of Christ and by its immediate transition to the Final Judgment, the idea that Christ having accomplished all there was to do is now resting from His labours until the Last Day. This, at any rate, does fairly, perhaps faithfully, represent no inconsiderable portion of the popular theology of the Ascension.

Indeed, many persons have thought that the completeness of the Atonement upon the Cross implied that Christ could not be engaged in further redemptive work in Heaven. The very language of the Epistle to the Hebrews appeared to confirm them in this belief. Was it not "when He had purged our sins"? Was it not after He had "offered one sacrifice for sins"? Was it not when He had already by one offering "perfected for ever them that are sanctified"—that he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high? What else could all this mean than victorious enthronement after strife? Achieved is the glorious work. The Redeemer was now seated and at rest expecting till His enemies were overcome.

II

However, in spite of all this, the fact remains that the Ascension is represented in the same Epistle to the Hebrews—as the sphere of *high-priestly intercession*. The sacred writer says, "Now in the things which we are saying the

chief point is this,"* (or to sum up what we are saying, R.V. margin) : "We have such a high priest who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens, a minister of the Sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." This is the central significance, the theological value, of the Ascension, that it is the presence in glory of One who discharges there the functions of a priest. A minister of the sanctuary. That expression loses its force in English. It means one engaged in liturgical duties. This heavenly high-priest is the Lord of Christians. They have precisely what Israel has not. The heavenly sphere of His priesthood is a divine creation. His work is discharged in the immediate presence of God. The meaning of the writer is certainly not—We have a person Who formerly acted as high-priest while He lived on earth, but has now resigned that function, and retired from it on His entrance into Heaven, when He sat down on the right hand of the throne. The meaning is, We have One who is a high-priest to this day, who continues to exercise that function in perpetuity. In other words, priesthood is exercised in Heaven.

It is a very impressive feature of the Epistle to the Hebrews that the sacred writer seems to push the priesthood of Christ right into the higher world, almost as if it had scarcely been exercised on earth. So much indeed is this the

* Heb. viii, 2 ff.

case that readers of the Epistle have at times inferred from its teaching that the priesthood of our Lord was exclusively exercised in Heaven. At any rate, one thing is quite clear : Priesthood is essentially the work in which the Ascended Christ is engaged.

And if we ask what precisely it is that Christ does in glory in His capacity as priest, the answer is that He has gone "to appear before the face of God for us."* "To appear" : that is, the self-presentation of Christ before the Father in Heaven. "For us" : that is, on our behalf. This self-presentation of Christ is clearly the setting before the Father a life which has passed through death. It is a presentation which the death has rendered possible, and in which the offering in death is really made complete. Christ is exercising in Heaven a high-priestly function for which His death upon the Cross prepared and qualified Him.

Moreover the characteristic of this function of our glorified high-priest is that He "abideth for ever." His priesthood is unchangeable—unalterable. It is in its nature eternal. "Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."† The writer rests the assurance and security of a Christian on this permanence and power of the priesthood of the glorified Christ.

* Heb. ix, 24. † Heb. vii, 25.

The intercession of our Lord in Heaven is plainly, for the author of this Epistle, a profoundly real thing. He clearly represents the Christian, when drawing near to God through Christ, supported by Christ's priestly intercession. It is because we have a sympathetic high-priest, One who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," that we can "draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, and may find grace to help us in time of need."*

This is what Bishop Westcott called "the effective advocacy by Christ, our great high-priest." "He pleads our cause with the Father, and makes the prayers heard which we know not how to shape."† No doubt it is quite true that "Christ's very presence before God in His humanity is in itself a prevailing intercession." But we must not limit Christ's effective advocacy in Heaven to the mere fact of His presence before the Father. For assuredly Christ's consciousness and sympathetic concern about our needs can never be left out. He must be still as much concerned for the needs of men as when He was on earth.

III

We are therefore taught by the Epistle to the Hebrews that the Ascension involves two distinct ideas concerning Christ; the one being His glorious exaltation, the other His perpetual

* Heb. iv, 15, 16. † p. 192.

priesthood and heavenly intercession. The tendency in certain religious circles to-day is to lay the stress upon Christ's enthronement and to minimize or ignore, or even explain away, His intercession. The conception of Christ as king has appealed far more strongly to certain modern schools than the conception of Him as Priest. We may, however, be quite certain that since both aspects are taught in the selfsame book in Scripture, both must be accorded their full value if Christian doctrine is to be proclaimed in its true proportion. Seeing that the sacred writer gives us two expressions—both the Session and the Intercession ; two ideas—both the Kingly and the Priestly ; this must certainly mean that the real position of the ascended Lord could not be adequately explained by one idea alone. On the contrary, it is evidently essential that the two conceptions should be combined. We contemplate the ascendency of One who is a King and yet a Priest ; a Priest and yet a King. Each aspect throws significance upon the other. It is this wonderful blending of contrasted ideas which gives peculiar significance, indeed absolute uniqueness, to the Ascended Son of Man. Neither aspect of this distinction can be omitted or undervalued without loss. We have no more right to explain away the Intercession than to explain away the Enthronement of Christ.

A French exponent of this Epistle,* who

* Ménégoz, p. 252.

certainly cannot be accused of any preference for or tendency to adopt its ruling ideas, predicted, as the result of his studies, that the Epistle to the Hebrews would hold an important place in the theology of the future. And certainly it is desirable that it should be so. For in the past a curiously apologetic tone has not seldom been adopted with regard to its priestly teaching. It is not by accident that a whole book in the New Testament is devoted to interpret the Ascension in the terminology of priesthood. The Epistle has no need that any man should apologize for its existence in the Canon of the Sacred Writings of the Christian Religion.

The heavenly priesthood and intercession of our Lord has been of recent years restored to a place in Christian contemplation. It is a singular fact, and one which gives ground for reflection, that the most effective teacher of this doctrine in the nineteenth century was a Scottish Presbyterian. Much no doubt has been done by our modern hymns to familiarize Christians with the thought that our Lord perpetually intercedes. But it is clear that instruction in this aspect of the faith has been given rather by our hymns than by our liturgy. For while the Consecration Prayer of Edward's first reformed book contained the words "having in remembrance His blessed Passion, mighty Resurrection, and glorious Ascension," the reference to the Ascension was afterwards, to our loss, cut out.

Significance of Our Lord's Ascension

The practical value to religion of this theology of the Ascension is exceedingly great. "It asserts that the sacrifice of Christ is not merely something that took place nearly nineteen hundred years ago. It is something which is eternally offered in heaven by the glorified Christ. "He abideth a priest for ever."* The Mediation of Christ and the Redemption of the World are not restricted to a transitory act or experience ; they consist in a permanent and abiding spirit behind all its possible expressions. The spirit of reparation which pervaded the Redeemer's whole career, and was supremely manifested in His actual surrender of life, still endures unchanged in His exalted glory. It is a very wonderful and awe-inspiring thought, when it comes upon us, and takes, even for occasional moments, possession of our minds, that Mediation, Intercession and Reparation are all continuous in the heavenly sphere at this very hour. Instead of leaving us to the exclusive contemplation of a sacrificial act, completed nineteen centuries ago, it reveals to our gaze a perpetual sacrificial spirit. Redemption is not something merely past and remote, and receding ever more and more into historic distances. On the contrary, Redemption is an abiding attitude of Christ in this present year of grace. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." This is a great conception for which we are principally indebted to the Epistle to the Hebrews.

* Foundations, p. 322.

PART II

WHITSUNTIDE SERMONS

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

By The Right Rev. E. W. Barnes
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Bishop of Birmingham

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind . . . And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Acts ii, 2-4.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

The Feast of Pentecost was the Harvest Festival Service of the ancient Jews. The seasons in Palestine differ from our own. The Spring begins earlier. Wheat there grows and ripens more quickly and can be gathered in more than two months before our harvest is ready for the sickle. Fifty days after Easter the Jews would normally have their wheat safely garnered. The occasion would characteristically be made a religious festival ; and, as all national worship was centralized at Jerusalem, to the Temple in the Holy City pious Jews would flock. Herod the Great had begun to build the Temple known to our Lord some fifteen years before Christ was born. From it Christ drove out the money-changers, those who had made His Father's house of prayer a den of thieves. So long as the Temple worship lasted, that is to say until Titus forty years after the Crucifixion rased the building to the ground, the Feast of Pentecost was annually observed with solemn splendour. Josephus relates that multitudes attended the festival, and thus corroborates St. Luke's statement that

devout men from every nation under heaven were gathered together at the first Pentecost after the Ascension of our Lord.

Of the ritual of the feast full particulars remain. Some of the best wheat of the season was specially chosen, "cut, threshed, brought to the Temple, ground and passed through twelve sieves to ensure its fineness." On the day before Pentecost two *omers* (about one-fifth of a bushel) of this choice flour were baked into flat loaves, four handbreadths wide, seven handbreadths long and four fingers high. Soon after sunrise on the day of the feast, to the singing of what we may best think of as the Hallelujah Chorus, the loaves with the selected portions of the sacrificial lambs were "waved forwards and backwards, up and down" before the Altar. Then they were offered to God as gifts to express the thankfulness of His people for the blessings of the Harvest. When the service was ended the large congregation would disperse to pass the rest of the day in private gatherings to which, we are told, "the poor, the stranger and the Levite were invited."

It was still early in the morning when the disciples of the Lord left the Temple to take breakfast together, if we may use the term, in the house of some member of the group. Conditions of life in the East differ from our own: a siesta during the hours of midday heat is universal. So the worship of the Temple began

with the dawn and the service was at an end before the sun had risen to any great height in the heavens. The nearest parallel by which we can illustrate the situation of the disciples before the outpouring of the Spirit is to imagine that a group of Christians had assembled for a celebration of the Eucharist at dawn on an early June morning and that they had then gone to share a common meal in a large sparsely-furnished shady room at the house of one of their number. All the members of the group were in a state of tense expectancy. Seven weeks earlier their Master had been crucified. Two days after that sorrowful event some of those dearest to Him had gone to His tomb to find it empty. Then individuals and small bodies of His followers began to declare that they had seen Him ; they affirmed that He was still alive, able to appear and disappear at will. Finally, according to St. Luke, He had led a number of them out of Jerusalem as far as Bethany and there after a final command to be " witnesses to Him in Jerusalem and in all Judæa and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth " " He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight." This last event had taken place but ten days before the feast of Pentecost, and naturally would have been the subject of eager and repeated discussion among all such followers of the Lord as were in Jerusalem. Moreover, those who had been present at the Ascension asserted that

Jesus had repeated a promise, which He had made several times before, that after He was taken from them they should receive power. In some way He would come to them again. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you," is St. Luke's version. "I will send unto you a Comforter" are the words given by the author of the Fourth Gospel. "Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world" is the concluding sentence of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. However phrased, there was a promise of definite spiritual aid. The little band of disciples were consequently all agog with excitement, convinced that some further revelation would shortly come. Of its form they probably had no conception. They expected to receive comfort and power: somehow or another to find anew the inspiration of the presence of their Lord. They were men and women waiting for some door of the spiritual world to open; or, to change the metaphor, for some stream of grace to gush out upon them. In such a state of exaltation men's spiritual sight, which is usually somewhat dull, becomes clear: the senses respond to stimuli to which they will not normally react: men see, feel and hear things that others cannot perceive. The nature of these things cannot be conveyed by ordinary language. We talk in terms which apply to the material world: if we would speak of a vision of heavenly things we are compelled to use the same language simply because we have

no other. When we speak of a miracle we mean a direct and unusual manifestation of God. To describe it we can only detail what seem to have been its outward signs. These signs may indeed truly show the presence of Divine influences ; but, of course, they do not explain either how or why God is working. Sometimes the signs are merely visible to the man, or men, whose spiritual insight is quickened : they are real to the inward understanding but not to the outward senses. To indicate their nature we must use metaphors ; and thus we must seem to depart from literal truth in trying to express the full overwhelming truth which is so infinitely more important. It is because men will not understand this difficulty of language, because they have not sufficient imagination to realize how impossible it is to express the spiritual by means of words in common use, that they are perplexed by the miracle of the first Whitsunday. Probably most men, when challenged as to the significance of the first Christian Pentecost, will admit that something happened, that the disciples thought that they saw and heard and felt God's presence. They are compelled to make such an admission for it is impossible to explain well-established facts connected with the growth of the Early Church without it. But some will use the term "collective hallucination" and mean thereby that, had they been present, they would have seen, heard and felt nothing of the spiritual

Presence which to the disciples was so real. Their contention is possibly true : St. Luke records that others mocking said : " These men are full of new wine." But let us turn to the story :

" Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the house . . . And there appeared to them cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." And men of every nation under heaven said " we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." Now remember that this was written some fifty years after the events had happened. The sentences do not purport to be the accurate account of an eye-witness ; but they give the form which the story took after half a century of popular tradition. I suggest that they indicate that men who had been there had originally said :

" This is the best way in which I can describe what occurred. We seemed to hear the noise of a great wind and everybody's face lighted up and all began to speak together, shouting with a sudden joy. The clamour caused all sorts and conditions of people, foreign Jews of numerous races, to assemble ; and many of them understood at once that the glory of God shone round about us and that the Spirit of God was with us. Men with whom we could not exchange two words instinctively realized what had happened :

others, of course, said that we were drunk." Allowing for the difference between oriental modes of expression and our own and remembering that the effect of popular tradition is to emphasize the outward form of any exceptional spiritual event, we are, I think, entitled to assume that the form which I have just given to St. Luke's story is that in which one of us to-day, had he been present as an eye-witness, would have related it. Every incident can then be paralleled from other Christian sources. Similar appearances have often marked the presence of the Holy Spirit at Christian gatherings, though probably they have never been so definite because the expectant faith of those assembled has never been so intense. Faith can not only move mountains : it can call down the lightning of the Spirit from heaven.

Now in thus explaining the nature of the miracle of Pentecost I do not wish to seem to evade clear issues. There is a widespread feeling that the clergy in their teaching have not the layman's sense of honesty—that we economize truth. Some of you may contend that I am guilty of such dangerous economy in discussing the miracle of Pentecost. Do you, I can imagine such an one saying, believe that the outward signs of the miracle were actually present as recorded in the Acts ? Well—it is difficult for me to give a plain "yes" or "no" to that question. There is a borderland between the

material and the spiritual—what we may call a psychical hinterland—which is, and probably always will remain, unexplored. Believing, as I do, that there was at Pentecost a remarkable and extraordinary manifestation of God's presence : being certain, as I am, that the material world is always subject to God's will : I dare not deny that physical signs might have been observed. But, from what one knows of the revelation of the Holy Spirit at other times, I am inclined to believe that what the disciples saw and heard before they began to speak would not have affected the photographic plate or the phonograph record. Had, for instance, Pontius Pilate been present he would merely have observed a strained excitement quickly succeeded by cries of exultant joy. God would have revealed Himself to the disciples and not to the Roman governor. Does not the Holy Spirit to-day go through a household or a congregation, awakening some and not others to enthusiastic service so that the blind and deaf remain apathetic ; while those who have eyes to see, see, and those who have ears to hear, hear ? Spirit speaks to expectant spirit : it is the fact and the message that are important ; and no material circumstances, be they as stupendous as earthquake or storm, should distract our attention from the voice of the Lord.

Were, then, the events of Pentecost no miracle ? you may ask. Emphatically they were miraculous,

I would reply. The Holy Spirit really and truly came to the disciples on that great day. Without doubt they received power from on high. Their expectant waiting upon God with faith in Christ was rewarded. Each one, then, knew that a new strength and wisdom and joy and glory and peace had come into his life. He knew, too, that he was not alone in his sudden possession of these gifts : the whole group of Christ's followers had simultaneously received them. Had you talked to those men of a " collective hallucination " they would have quietly set aside your lack of understanding. They were sure that God was with them : a great certainty had come into their souls. They were changed men ; and history subsequently proved that some at least were ready to encounter any dangers, to submit to any hardships, if only they might induce others to capture their joy. Such enthusiasm, such vivid faith and glowing zeal, such sane strength and deepened insight, as these men received and showed, were based, I hold, on a true spiritual revelation. The Apostles were quick to feel, and their actions and influence immediately showed, that some new force was at work among them : an unknown force which they termed the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God. Had you asked them why they asserted that the power among them was from God, they would have said simply that they knew it to be so. What they felt explained itself. They had waited patiently upon

the Lord and He had, as Christ had promised, come to them.

Surely it is always thus with each of us. There are times when we know that God is with us. Flashes of understanding, moments of spiritual peace, which instinctively we assert to be from Him, call us to His service. They link themselves to the goodness and beauty by which God continuously expresses Himself in the world. They strengthen us to resist evil : they draw us to Jesus : they urge us to wrestle and fight and pray. They help us to see what is best in others, to live on the heights, to escape the prison walls of daily pain or care, and to look to far horizons.

Let us not then go away from this Whitsunday service with the feeling that the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was something that we too cannot share. Neither let us, because we can share it, be tempted to imagine it to be some earth-born impulse or some illusion common to special types of men. We are, of course, on one side animals with an animal ancestry stretching back to the most humble origin in remote ages. By an amazing series of changes we have been evolved from the most primitive forms of life. We are animals : and as one reads the newspapers of the day it sometimes seems as if we were falling back to the jungle and the slime where life expresses itself merely in strife and lust. But Whitsunday reminds us that we are more than animals. We are, too, spiritual beings with

a love of beauty and a moral sense : we feel the claims of goodness : we have instincts of reverence and purity. Something within us draws us to search for truth, to give of our best to others, to work and love and pray. All these spiritual realities centre on God : all show and prove that we can reach and be with God. And when He reveals Himself as at Pentecost we begin to enter His Kingdom. Then we know what it will be possible to become when the animal within us perishes with the body. It is then that visions of perfection, never to be realized during life, become real and splendid. The gift of the Spirit tears down the curtains of darkness ; and, as with the clean cut of a sword, rends the veil of the flesh that shuts out the sight of God. In such a moment the glory of the Redeemer streams into the soul, and we feel the life-giving force that makes all things new, the creative power of Christ. The Spirit of God works within and upon our spirit, making us true sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ, the first-born from the dead.

. . . . . .

Father, help us to purify our hearts and minds that we may know that Thy Spirit is with us all the days of our life, calling us to the service of Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

GOD'S DRUNKEN MEN

By James Black, D.D.
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"*These men are full of new wine.*" Acts ii, 13.

God's Drunken Men

These were odd happenings, truly, at Jerusalem on this memorable day of Pentecost. Serious-minded and sedate people—people indeed who had been somewhat gloomy and depressed up to this moment—were swayed by a delirious joy through the power of God, as the summer leaves are tossed by a sudden gust of evening wind. If I searched history, I could not find anywhere more sane and reasonable people than these apostles and disciples, many of them even somewhat heavy and phlegmatic ; and yet on this day of Pentecost these douce people broke into a sheer extravagance of delirious elation which has puzzled their apologists to this day. It is little wonder that the spectators of their own time had only one obvious and succinct explanation—*these people are drunk* !

I

I am not concerned with the strange scene itself—though I venture to suggest that some part of its apparent strangeness to our minds may be due to the fact that we in this generation

are too fatally familiar with the events, the ideas, and the emotions which burst on that audience for the first time like a bolt from the blue! I have seen a raw young poet dazzled, *intoxicated*, by a flimsy notion which seemed to him a great vision. What must it have been for these people to realize for the first time that *there is such a person as the Holy Ghost*? If we could think ourselves back into their situation and recapture the emotion of this idea, we might not consider the situation so *outré*.

I am concerned more with some judgments passed on the scene than with the scene itself. Here in my text I have chosen one of them, a frank criticism from dispassionate observers. Incidentally, I take it as a proof of good faith on the part of the writer that he has had the courage to record such an extremely damaging judgment. . . . These critics, standing on the edge of the crowd, saw all that took place. They noted the fierce, extravagant excitement. They heard the wild, confused babbling. They observed the unbounded and unbalanced enthusiasm. And then—with a shrug of the shoulders, no doubt—they made their immortal criticism: "These men are full of new wine. They have imbibed raw, heady spirits. *They are drunk.*"

Of one thing I am reasonably sure—that this criticism was not in any way the outcome of a bad heart, or the suspicion of hatred. There was nothing vicious or biased in this misjudgment.

It was launched, no doubt, with a touch of supercilious mockery or in polite pity. But I believe that the critics were perfectly honest in their judgment. What took place could only be explained, in their view, by the belief that the disciples were intoxicated and had passed the bounds of decency and reason.

Further, on the face of it, it was a very probable and common-sense explanation. In any other similar case, it would likely have been a *true* explanation. Let us imagine for a moment that we are present with these observers on the fringes of the crowd. We stand on tiptoe to watch the proceedings : we scan the scene and observe people gesticulating like windmills ; everybody is calling aloud at one time in words which sound to us as so much gibberish, like the chatter of monkeys ; we hear nothing but a broken jabber of uncouth sounds ; disorder reigns everywhere, and there seems neither rhyme nor reason in the conduct of the people, who behave like dancing dervishes. Would you not feel inclined to pluck your friend by the sleeve and say with some disgust, "Oh, do come away. This is rather unseemly. What a pity to see people like that ! *These men are full of new wine*" ?

II

But while this may seem reasonable and common sense, I wish you to observe that it *is* undoubtedly the criticism of an outsider, *a*

mere bystander who has no first-hand knowledge of any of the experiences which lie behind the event ! It is purely a surface judgment, from the edge of the crowd—not biased or vicious, I admit—but formed from no intimate knowledge of the facts or experiences which it criticizes. It suggests to me the larger question, whether the criticism of an outsider is ever worth any serious attention. In a matter of science, for instance, we do not attribute any value to the judgment of an outsider. If one who stands merely on the fringe of things remarks to an astronomer, "You don't tell me, surely, that that little twinkling star is a million times bigger than the earth," what does the astronomer say? He says merely, "My dear person, have you studied this subject at all? If you are only speaking from the edge of the crowd, your views are not worth the flick of my fingers." In the same way, rightly enough, the outsider counts for nothing in other branches of knowledge—medicine, law, engineering, natural history, or indeed, in any branch of specialized experience. There is no hint of intellectual insolence in this attitude; it only means that where there is *specialized experience*, the outsider or the "man in the street" doesn't count! . . . Yet we think he should always count in religion. We are constantly told to consult the man in the street, or to prune our message according to his tests. But Jesus never did that: He

and the apostles believed that spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned. Religion can only be judged by those who enter into its experience. The man in the street—so long as he remains *in the street*—has as little right to pass judgments on religious facts as on scientific facts !

III

Look for a moment at this typical case of an outsider's criticism. We know that the man who expressed it did not inquire into any of the facts. He did not weigh up evidence. He knew nothing about the character and work of the disciples. He merely saw some things happening which he could not understand, or which did not fit in with his limited experience. So he brushed the incident aside with the lowest materialistic explanation that leapt to his mind. "These men are full of new wine." It is the outsider's condemnation that *that* seemed the only explanation to him !

The man on the edge of the crowd is constantly judging Jesus and His people in these easy, stupid ways. He finds, for instance, that you as a Christian are deeply interested in things which do not appeal to him ; he discovers that you are sometimes passionately enthusiastic, or fiercely indignant at some wrong. You do yourself hurt for conscience' sake, or you stint yourself for some visionary ideal. And he says, with a shake of his head, "Good people no

doubt, but unbalanced—they are full of new wine."

And he is quite right. Although his judgment is foolishly wrong, it is yet one of the finest criticisms that has ever been passed on religion. Sometimes the outsider blunders unwittingly into the heart of a great truth. I do not know of any finer indirect testimony to the sway and power of the Holy Spirit than this mocking criticism. . . . It reminds me of another historic judgment, where mockers hit upon a buried truth. They took Jesus, dressed Him in purple, put a crown on His head and a reed in His hand, and cried in raillery, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And that is the only true thing spoken in that historic trial—"King of the Jews!"

I am glad of this outsider's criticism of the events of Pentecost. He noticed what is the *real essence of any life that is touched and swayed by the Spirit of God.* That Holy Spirit had descended on the young Church like a flash of light, throwing it for the time into amazement and outrageous joy; and I think that our observer, with his calm eyes, noticed what it all meant. He expressed the matter foolishly, of course; but he saw the amazing truth.

IV

In the first place, he observed—what we often forget—that Christianity is indeed a divine intoxication. When it is real, it is a ferment

in the human heart. Jesus comes into a man's life with a rush, shaking him from his sin, changing all his values, swinging him round to look into the eyes of God. What else can happen than that the world is turned upside down? And for the dream that is begotten in his heart, a man counts the whole world well lost. . . . But what does the outside observer say about it all? Exactly what is said here. When Festus examined Paul, he had only one judgment of him—"mad." Much learning, Sir, has made you mad! . . . When the early Christians went singing into the arena to fill the lions' mouths, what did the world say? Why! the wise observer, from Pliny downward, thought it a strange folly. . . . The Crusaders gave up home and love and life; and in speaking of them, a modern historian from his arm-chair remarks that they were "drunk with a dream."

The outsider is right. The real Christian is "a fool for Christ's sake." These bleached bones of Livingstone in Central Africa, Mary Slessor in her mud-hut in Calabar, the Covenanters on the Scottish hills, Latimer on his heap of faggots—well, what can the world say of them except that they are "drunk with a dream"? But it is a foolish explanation of a real truth!

We have lost this to-day; and it is the Church's peril. All of us are far too cold and calm and reasoned and sedate. It is our condemnation that we don't find anything amazing, or even

unbalancing, in the love of God. We like our religion sedate and prim and proper. No extravagances, if you please! No amens or hallelujahs, if you please! Let us be orderly and decent and extremely reasonable and decorous. Let us see that the ordered calm of our praise is never broken by a testimony from some stunned and amazed soul that has been snatched from the mouth of Hell, and longs to pour out its thanks in a song as natural as the lilt of a thrush. And if anything happens at a Revival meeting—anything out of the pre-arranged order, mark you—if some big-hearted fisherman becomes vocal with amazement at God's glory and gives rein to his emotion about Christ's power—oh! do stop him, if you please—these people are dreadfully neurotic—isn't it a pity that they get so easily unbalanced? . . . And what has happened to cause our contemptuous annoyance? Just this—that some poor soul, like these people at Pentecost, has been drenched by a baptism of the Holy Ghost, has seen the infinite mercy of God, has known himself forgiven and saved, and has cried out in a broken ecstasy of praise to God. *It is only a modern Pentecost*—but it makes us shudder. I tell you, it is not sin but civilization that will kill the Church.

Some people came running to Moses and said, "There are two men, outside the official seventy, who are prophesying through the camp. What shall we do about them, Sir? This is

intolerable." And Moses answered, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them." Order and decency are great gifts: but we pay too big a price for them if we purchase them at the sacrifice of the tumultuous Holy Spirit.

V

But further, the outsider observed not only this strong emotion and intoxication among the disciples, but also its nature—*a strange gladness*, a delirious joy that swept them beyond bounds. There is plenty of fanaticism, mere ecstasy, among the dervishes: but Christian ecstasy is essentially *joy*. These disciples at Pentecost were crying out in an extravagant gladness which they could hardly understand. We read that they were praising "the wonderful works of God." . . . Now, I do not know of anything that can less be crushed into a vessel than joy: it runs over like bubbling wine. And *wine* it is—an intoxication. People do all sorts of foolish things when they are happy. They seem almost to walk on air. They burst out into little snatches of song and gaiety at the most awkward moments. To see this perfectly, observe some schoolboy who is looking forward to a long-expected treat: he can think of nothing else when awake, and even in sleep his joy weaves itself into his uneasy dreams. . . . How poor all this is compared with the dazzling joy of a

sinner's soul finding God! It is not a remarkable thing that redeemed men should sing aloud; *it is a remarkable thing that they shouldn't!* When one thinks of the love of God for people like us, the fullness and sweep of His magnificent forgiveness, our calling as sons into eternal life in Jesus—why! there is something wrong with us that we take it all so calmly! At least, in those early days, when God's love in the Holy Spirit was revealed to that throng of disciples, they were carried off their feet in amazed joy. I have no doubt at all that they did foolish things—you would have been shocked, you decent folk, if you had seen them! They sang; they laughed; they even jabbered childish nonsense. And so this outsider, standing tiptoe on the edge of the crowd, cried out in a disgust that is singularly modern, "How shocking! These people are full of new wine."

Why is it that we are missing all this to-day? This vision of laughing, gesticulating Christianity, this picture of unbounded and even riotous joy? We are *not* happy to-day, say what you like. The people before me now are evidently not happy! Generally, we are a gathering of the most sober, douce and self-restrained people in Edinburgh. If we have been smiling and happy outside the church on a bright morning like this, no sooner do we enter the church than we stow our smiles away, as an engine-driver shuts off steam. In fact, we have a distinct

notion that laughter and happiness belong to the world and not to the Church. The devil claims all the smiles and all the fun ; and all that befits the Christian Church is a sad and sober sedateness.

Does it not strike you, as you think again of that narrative about Pentecost, that there is something deeply wrong somewhere ? Here was a group of early Christians so unrestrained and so " effervescent " that outsiders thought them full of new wine ! And here is a group of people in St. George's, thinking of the same things as the people at Pentecost, and yet outsiders would imagine that we were mourning the end of the world ! . . . Ah ! but that is the point. *Are we thinking of the same things as the people at Pentecost* ? I doubt it, indeed. For I am sure that if we thought of the same things as they did, we should *behave* as they did, so that some chance observer here would say, " Those men and women are full of new wine." Even though it might shock us and wound our sense of the proprieties, I would to God that somebody could say that of us !

VI

What did they think of at Pentecost ?—for it was this that stirred them like a whirlpool. Let me try, as I close, to give you one flashing glance.

As we know, they thought of the "wonderful works of God." They thought of God's love and beautiful grace. They thought of Jesus, crucified and risen, the victorious Lord. They thought of how their own poor, pitiful sins were for ever forgiven and forgotten in God's amazing love. They remembered that they could now call God their Friend, their Lover, their Saviour. They thought of the Holy Spirit, who moved them now, and who would keep and guide and hold them safe, until they were brought clean and purified into the presence of God. They thought of the infinite sacrifice of Jesus and the infinite gain of His people. And they thought of God's welcoming eyes at the last when they would enter into their perfect heritage.

And when they thought of all this, they lifted up their hands and their voices, singing in broken, stuttering praise, laughing aloud in a new-found elation, until their joy mingled with the joy of the angels. I can hear them laughing now.

And that poor fool over on the edge of the crowd pulled his companion by the sleeve and said, "Come away! This is rather shocking. These people are full of new wine."

And he was gloriously right. It was *the Wine of God*, that makes a sinner's heart glad with song. *These are God's Drunken Men!*

PARTING AND BLESSING

By J. T. Forbes, D.D.
Glasgow

"*Parting and Blessing.*"—Acts i. 1-11.

Parting and Blessing

This passage, with its glimpse of intercourse between Jesus and the disciples, after the resurrection, forms the record of the transition from the Christ of the flesh to the Christ of the Spirit ; from the seeing, touching and handling of the word of life to the fellowship of the soul with its unseen Lord, out of which so much of the New Testament grew. It is a full and rich portion of Scripture. We may extract from it a trinity of words and ideas which may help us to-day.

We have the proofs given by the Risen Christ. The Lord Jesus did give proofs. The Gospel has no quarrel with science ; only with obstinate prejudice masquerading under that term. In the days of His flesh, Christ did give proofs to show Who and what He was. Later these were used by Christian advocates in too external a way as mere buttresses to the Gospel. We have now gone too far in belittling their value. They are to be viewed as integral to the Gospel, part of the revelation of God given therein. When Christ raised from the dead the son of the widow of Nain, He showed not only Divine power, but

Divine gentleness and holy consideration for human feelings. Naturally, such acts flow from Him, and in their spontaneity display His character. They are not outside revelation but within it.

It was so with the Resurrection. At first the contrary seems to be true. Christ never forced unbelief to surrender by showing Himself to an enemy. What that means is that He selects His witnesses, as God the Father selects certain natures to receive His testimony to His Son, Who was to be born of a woman, and Whose word was to save the world. The Annunciation was secret ; the Temptation was secret ; no man saw the Resurrection. During His earthly ministry, Christ chose certain special natures to witness the raising of the little daughter of Jairus, to witness the Transfiguration, and to be with Him in Gethsemane ; so here He chooses certain people who had attained a special degree of advancement in the spiritual order to be witnesses of His risen life ; to hold intercourse with Him in that life ; and to behold His spiritual body.

These witnesses—simple, straightforward men —all believed that they had seen the Risen Christ. No one believed them to be insincere. Their testimony answers the demand that such an event be well attested. But some think events reported may be so improbable that no evidence can establish them. This is plainly the position taken up by some who disbelieve the story of the

Resurrection. They rule out certain events as being incapable of being established by evidence. This is only true of things contradictory to reason. It is contradictory to reason to speak of an inside without an outside ; or, of a stick with only one end ; or of a whole that is not greater than its part. But a statement may be made to persons, which contradicts all their previous experience, and yet is true. The black swans of Australia really existed though scientific men, at first, denied their existence ; the platypus really existed, though its existence was denied. Now, some believe in the Resurrection ; others do not. Why ? The unbeliever does not connect it with the Personality of Jesus Christ, and the personalities of converted men. The believer sees in the changed characters of himself and others evidence for the power of the unseen Christ. He feels in himself the working of Christ's spirit, and he traces this work to its source in the Living Lord. This faith has proved itself to be the most powerful and the grandest spiritual agency in the world. If we are to judge faith by its fruits we cannot as rational men believe that characters like those of the Apostles and martyrs, ancient and modern, men like Hudson Taylor and Griffith John, like James Chalmers and Bishop Patteson, were reared on untruth. Truth was at the basis of their natures : they were of the elect who cannot be deceived. We have seen in past history evidence of the power of Christ in men.

Whence has come that energy by which Christianity, even when corrupted, works out its own purification? We have seen the image and superscription of the Master on lives which show a goodness not of this world. Have you not had tokens in your own experience of His gracious presence? We say, not merely that these things are most easily explained on the Christian view; but that they are unexplained on any other view.

These are some of the "proofs" Jesus Christ gives us. They do not coerce the mind. They speak to souls seeking the things that are above. The gross and sinful mind has no reason to wish Christianity to be true, so long as it wishes to remain as it is. God wants free service. He would fain have natures that have formed "the resolution to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis." You say that you have often nothing to go upon but the recorded word of Christ. But to trust that is trusting Him; and that is the highest reverence one soul can pay to another. All the mighty truths, Christ's Sonship, His power to forgive sin, His risen life, His constant companying with His people, rest on promises. Do you think there is any fear of a broken word in His case? The Christian is not a clever calculator. He is one who believes that, in Shorthouse's words, "to those who know Jesus . . . and have seen Him . . . better Jesus beaten and defeated than all the Universe besides, triumphing and crowned." When we trust Christ we rise

with Him. It is a truth of experience to be realized, appropriated, exemplified. Trust Him : He will show Himself alive to you by many infallible proofs.

Before the Lord's departure, the disciples were still concerned with their old thoughts about a material kingdom. He does not trouble to dispel them. He says : " You cannot have knowledge of the secrets of God ; but you can have spiritual power for the task of your lives. Our New Testament has often one word for two Greek words. The same word is sometimes used for a word which means authority, and for another which means capacity or strength. The authority in a ship rests in the commander on the bridge : the power is in the engine-room below. What was the nature of the power which the disciples received ? Something happened to them which made them adequate for their life-work, made them able ministers of the New Testament. They did not receive, the Church they founded did not receive, political power, at any rate, for a long time. The Church was a missionary church and a martyr church for generations before it became a political church. This did in time come. Thought was dying, and Christianity became an intellectual force. Ethical standards and practices were low, and Christianity became a moral force. There was social disunion and a drift to disruption, and Christianity became a social force. By and by, it grew so

strong as to become a power to be captured, and not fought. It became inevitably political. But this carried with it immense evils. It partook of the lower life of the State, and became filled with the spirit of ambition and party. Power of a kind came to it : not the power Christ gives.

It was not mainly mental enlargement which they received. The Gospel brought new, deep thoughts to many minds. Natures that were dull and dim came to know the freedom and enlightenment of spiritual life. Knowledge is power. The experience of the Apostles themselves illustrates this. Yet this was not the main element, or even a very prominent element. The main thing was nobler.

It was not healing power. That had been, in measure, already given. Yet it was intermittent. Sometimes the disciples could say " We can " ; sometimes they had to confess " We cannot " achieve our task. Sometimes they reported gladly : " Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Thy name " ; sometimes they asked, " Why could not we cast the evil spirit out ? " After Pentecost great deeds were wrought ; yet even these actions were occasional and exceptional.

It was not a priestly authority different from that spiritual priesthood conferred on all believers. To the whole community of the faithful Christ had given the power to declare the forgiveness of sins to the penitent. The spiritual insight and fellowship with God which devotion gains were

the inner condition of exercising this power. As yet it was latent, unexercised. A vivifying, holy force was needed. This was the great gift—spiritual, personal power. It was the presence of the Master, the Spiritual Christ. A new influence mantled upon His servants ; a new inspiration moved them from within. Men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. They continued with Him. He is in them. They are in Him. Their proper personality is, in a real sense, lost in Him. They are transfigured men. His wisdom illumines their judgments. His love swells their hearts. There is a commingling of soul. It is the gift of the Spirit. It is the form in which Christ dwells in men.

Without this they were not deemed fit for their life-work. They had been three years with Jesus ; had seen miracles ; had heard speeches ; had learned much in private ; had witnessed the Passion, and had seen Christ living after death—yet, in His judgment, they were unfit to go forth as His ministers. They were still weak, irresolute, timid, perplexed. Then comes the gift, and they are fitted to face the world. This is the supreme preparation. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself did not take up His life-work till after the Holy Spirit's descent upon Him at His baptism. After His victory in the desert He returned in the " power of the Spirit " into Galilee, and embarked upon His task. The Divine Man, the Christ of God, tarried until endued with power from on

high. It is incumbent upon us to "learn to labour and to wait"; but still more to learn to wait upon God before we labour. It is not mere passivity. When you are waiting for a son returning from abroad, you do not wait very passively. There are arrivals of boats to be watched, trains to be studied, simple preparations to be made in the home. Nothing is to be allowed to interfere, if possible to be avoided, with the joy of the visit. You arrange matters so as to make the most of the time. It is in some such eagerness of expectancy that we should wait upon God. The disciples were not passive in their waiting: they prayed. They threw themselves with passion into supplication. Their praying was not the cherishing of a vague wish. It was fervid and it prevailed.

Consider how great this gift is. It is identified with the coming of the Lord to individual hearts. Is the Church ready to take the gift? God has given the Spirit: the gift is not recalled. "The gifts and callings of God are without repentance." There is nothing capricious in the Divine action. It is continuous. The Comforter is given to be with the faithful for ever. Yet there are conditions —of which, perhaps, heart-hunger is chief—of reception. It was given to the Church to long for the great Gift. They were of one mind in desire; they were together in one place; they were willing, as a group, to be guided. They were men and women who had been touched individu-

ally by the power of Christ, "gathered souls," out of whom the community of renewed people was formed.

To this band of "men whose hearts God had touched" the Saviour committed the work of witnessing for Him in the world. Their testimony was confirmed by their own changed lives. Their commission is the abiding commission of the Church. The gift of Pentecost is a fact, as is the Crucifixion. We may open or close our hearts to it: but the Spirit is here. The object for which we have been blessed is that we should become blessings to others. Christ left no building, no writing, no material relic. He had to borrow a room for His last meeting with His friends. But He left the gift of His spirit, and laid on us the task of witness-bearing. It is laid on the Church, not on ministers only. We must not call our faults by fine names. Natural reticence may easily become cowardice. Nationally, we shrink from effervescence and "gush"; but it is certain that Christ's followers cannot steal incognito through life. The late Dr. McAdam Muir quotes Addison's remarks on men ashamed of owning themselves on the Christian side. One "was suspected of being pious, though no man ever hid vice with greater caution than he did his virtue." Another was "so very modest a man that he had not the confidence to say grace at his own table."

This power has many methods of operation,

but all are spiritual. "The Spirit divideth to each one severally as He will." There are hewers of wood and drawers of water; there are shepherds, and there are master-builders. The efficacy in all comes from obedience. Power comes as we go about our task: "As they went they were cleansed," as we go the fitness comes. Loyalty becomes the organ of strength. Two things about witness-bearing stand true: it must be of Christ and it must be in the Spirit. Our possession of the Spirit is what alone gives us any claim to be witnesses and workers in the Kingdom. Joseph's qualification for high office must, on another plane, be the Christian's: "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" A true artist does not have to go about asserting that he is an artist, and apologizing for his failure in producing anything. He produces and is known. Gustave Doré was once passing the Italian frontier and had mislaid his passport. The officers called upon him to prove his identity. He procured a sheet of coarse paper and a piece of charcoal, and drew a picture of Victor Emmanuel who was then King of Italy. The officers made no more difficulty: only Doré could draw like that. Men will make no difficulty about our Christian claims if we show on our lives the impress of the King. What is it that is lacking in so many witnesses and workers? It is the freshness, the originality, the creative miracle-working power of the Spirit.

Parting and Blessing

"Wanting is—what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant
—Where is the blot?
Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same
—Framework which waits for a picture to frame:
What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with naught they embower!
Come then, complete incompletion, O comer,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love."

Very simply does Luke tell of the parting of the Christ from His disciples: "As He blessed them, He was parted from them." He was gone, but He had not forsaken them. They had to learn to bear the sense of His absence, while still believing themselves not forsaken. He parts from them not in alienation, but to show how He can protect and guide from the spiritual world.

There are happy times when believing men and women rejoice in the sense of the Divine nearness. In such hours we gain insight, and feel the sweetness of heavenly things. Yet Christ was more surely with His disciples in spirit than before. Their faith was purer. When the aids of sense were withdrawn, they relied more steadfastly on the power that was freed from limits attaching to the body. They touched a higher

blessing than His company in the flesh. Opposition, prisons, the Cross in its manifold forms—all things were to lead them to a deeper fellowship of heart than they had known in the days of His flesh. Emotion may need to be purified. If a blessing has come to us unaccompanied even by a sense of peculiar nearness, it is yet ground for joy and praise.

There is one kind of consciousness of absence which is a real blessing, though a pain : it is the sense of absence which is caused by sin. Sin grieves Christ and causes Him to withdraw. Yet the withdrawal is an unspeakable mercy. If sin could consist—an impossible thought—with comfort of soul, no surer method of hardening us in evil could be conceived. The "parting from us" in such a case is blessing. It creates a desolation in the heart which sends us in penitence and confession back to Him.

Some loss of the emotional sense of His presence may come to teach us new lessons or to impart new gifts. It was so with the Twelve, no doubt, when sent on their early mission, and again with the Seventy. It is so, we may be sure, in the hour of sorrow. It is not congenial to God to let pain come upon us : "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve" us. But Love can test us by pain. How often may there not be a Divine compulsion to impart some new grace that we should grow holy and strong in the school of sorrow !

Parting and Blessing

"They returned unto Jerusalem . . . they went up into an upper room." God's way is in the sanctuary. The disciples got into contact with Him there. The Spirit soon descended upon them in power. Christ came unto them again, and their hearts rejoiced. They proclaimed Him as the Saviour of the world, and won thousands to the new life. If grief or disappointment has come to you, it is not harsh counsel but tender to say, "Worship and obey." If you cannot feel glad in the outer sanctuary or in the inner temple of the heart, "Wait thou only upon God." "The Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come" to you. Does any heart feel that Christ has departed? If you long for His return, if you wait at the sepulchre of some lost hope still sincerely desiring the brightness of His rising for your life, you may fearlessly recall the angel's word: "Fear not ye. I know that ye seek Jesus." He will meet you in the House of Prayer, or in the events and experiences of your busy day; and one day He will meet you, never to part again. *Amen.*

"GIVER OF LIFE"

By W. Foxley Norris, D.D.
Dean of Westminster

"*He that hath the Son hath Life.*"
1 S. John v, 12.

" Giver of Life "

THERE is no more interesting subject than life.

Those who are young have it before them and they want to test its possibilities. Those who are old feel that it is slipping away from them and they want to capture and retain what is permanent in it.

There is no more interesting subject than life.

And life is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit of God is there is life, and where there is life there is the Spirit.

It is obvious that there are many degrees of life. An insect " lives " : a man "lives " : but there is little resemblance between these two degrees of " life." Then again there is little resemblance between the life of the under-developed, feeble-minded child of misfortune and the life, say, of the vigorous man of affairs : little resemblance between the life of the labourer and the life of the Diplomatist or the Poet or the man of Science. All these have " life," but they have it—or have developed it—in different degrees. But even so we are a long way from an adequate account of " life." There is physical life, intellectual life, moral life, spiritual life.

In the Nicene creed we speak of the Holy Ghost as the " Giver of Life."

To-day is the Festival of the Holy Spirit ; and Life is His inestimable gift ; and St. John says, " He that hath the Son hath Life."

What is the life of which the Holy Spirit is the giver ? What is the life which depends upon the possession of the Son of God ?

This concerns us all. We all have life. We are all conscious that it is a mysterious possession. We all recognize that death is all round us and that our own death will come. We all know that life is something we cannot control. None of us believes that it ends with death. What is the meaning of all this ? What is the relation of these various statements ?

I believe in the Holy Ghost—Giver of Life.

Now all physical life is the gift of the Holy Spirit of God. It was when God " breathed into his nostrils the breath of life " that man " became a living soul " (Gen. ii, 6). Spirit means breath and it is one of the titles of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Man, through science, has achieved marvellous things . . . but no scientific discovery has ever yet been able to create life. It cannot be disputed that life is the gift of a higher power than man. It is the gift of God. Science may record it but does not account for it. Therefore the statement that it is the gift of the Spirit of God is not to be denied.

Well then, God through His Holy Spirit vivifies the material body. This is physical life—the life which God gave to man when He " breathed into his nostrils "—the life which we share with all living creatures—the life which our Lord Jesus Christ gave back to Lazarus when He called him from the grave. Life in this sense is the possession obviously of everyone who is alive. It is not limited to those who " have the Son."

What then is meant by these words, " He that hath the Son hath Life "? We are reminded of the words of St. John the Baptist, " He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life " (St. John iii, 36). And again, of the words of our Lord Himself, " He that . . . believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life " (St. John v, 24). And we are reminded of many other words of our Lord, " Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man . . . ye have no life in you." " Whoso eateth My flesh hath eternal life." " I am the bread of life." " I am come that they might have life." In all these and many other similar words of our Lord, it is clear that something more than physical life is promised. Aye, and something more than even eternal existence. That there is a larger, fuller life, a life which is not confined and limited by earthly circumstance, a Life that is above life, that not only does not end with death but can be

entered into here and now and can never be destroyed : that this is so is not merely the teaching of our religion but accords with our own intuition. And Life in this larger sense is the gift of the Holy Spirit as truly as physical life is.

All through history, long before the truth was revealed in Christ, thinkers had felt after this larger Life ; here and there great souls had given up all for it. Greek philosophy went a long way towards it : chosen souls like Akhnaton saw it dimly. These were amongst those who prepared the way for the full teaching of revelation, and then from St. Stephen down to fellow Christians of our own times, came the long procession of men who were ready to die that they might live.

" He that hath the Son hath Life." Someone may say, " I recognize that there is an intellectual life, and a moral life, and a spiritual life, which cannot be bounded by circumstance or killed by what we call death : but is there more than that ? "

You and I mean more than that when we assert our belief in the Holy Ghost, " the Lord and Giver of Life." You and I mean more than that by our belief in " Life Everlasting." There is a degree of life, a quality or kind of life, which is possessed by those in whom dwells the Son and who dwell in Him : who have been in His own way admitted into membership of Him and by their own conscious voluntary act have

surrendered themselves to Him and consecrated themselves to the life that is His. " If ye then be risen with Christ seek those things that are above," " set your affections on things above."

There is a life that abhors sin ; that uses this world as a temporary lodging ; that regards possessions here merely as a trust ; that lives wholly for others and not for self , a life that we speak of as being " in Christ." This is the life that he has who " hath the Son." This is life at its best and fullest. This is the life that ensures peace and happiness here and hereafter.

Surely if this be so, the supreme aim and purpose of our life must be to secure it. And we know that it is so, not merely because we are so taught by our religion, but because we have seen it with our eyes and know it for a fact.

This is the full gift of the Spirit : it is the offer of this that is made to us on Whitsunday. For Whitsunday is the birthday of that Body in which this Life is to be had. We do not say it cannot be had outside the Body. The operations of God's Holy Spirit cannot be defined and limited. But we can say and we do believe that in Christ this full life is offered to men, and His Body is the means whereby we may share it.

" In Him was life ; and the life was the light of men." " He that hath the Son hath life."

THE MEANING OF PENTECOST

By James Reid, M.A.
Eastbourne

"*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.*"
Acts ii, 4.

The Meaning of Pentecost

This is one of the most amazing stories in the world. There is none which should be more interesting to Christian people, for it is the story of the launch of the Christian Church. It is the story of how the Church which had been slowly shaping in the quietness and obscurity of that upper room became conscious of life and power and set out upon its mission. Up to this point it had been like a ship under construction, as it were. But now it is launched on the waters and becomes a living thing, with sails set and filled with the invisible winds of God, heading for the open sea. So far these men and women have been rather ordinary people, their love for Jesus Christ the one thing keeping them together. They were perplexed, terribly timid, and very conscious of their weakness. Some of them would as soon have thought of trying to fly as of putting ten words together in public speech. One or two were even very reserved. Then, as they waited, all on a sudden as it seemed, something happened which changed their personalities. They became conscious of a unity which broke

down every other barrier. They found themselves in possession of faculties they had never dreamed could be theirs. They lost all fear of people and all thought of themselves. They were fired with a message, and a passion to tell people about it, to spread the good news of a love which had flooded their lives and carried them off their feet.

As we read the story so many centuries away, there is a question we inevitably ask. What really happened at Pentecost? We realize, of course, the change that came in these men. But what was it that really happened? That is the interesting thing. The explanation the Bible gives is almost as mysterious as the incident itself. It is that "they were filled with the Holy Spirit." This does not help us very much. For what we want to know is just what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We know the results of the experience. They have reappeared since and they will reappear again. Every great revival brings back Pentecost to our minds. You have only to read the description of John Wesley's meetings to realize that the thing does happen: that people who are just like others will develop new gifts which make their speech tongues of fire and give their very personalities the power to subdue the evil in the hearts of men and to quicken them with faith and love. It happens, too, in ways less startling: a good many have come to find themselves in possession of what Matthew Arnold called "a power not ourselves

which makes for righteousness." The Bible name for it is "being filled with the Holy Spirit." What does it really mean?

It would be easy to answer that question in a theological way, and say that the Spirit of God, who is known in the creeds as the third person in the Trinity, had suddenly come to inhabit their souls. But who or what is this Holy Spirit? The New Testament is full of reference to Him and to His work. Some of them are confusing. It is a question, for instance, whether Paul believed in or felt any difference between what he called "the Holy Spirit" and what is called "the living Christ." In verse after verse he identifies the two. In one place he says quite definitely "Now the Lord is that Spirit." For him the influence of the Spirit was just Jesus at work upon his life, making a new man of him. The fact remains, however, that the New Testament people spoke continually of a Holy Spirit. They must have meant something by it. For they were not romancing in the realms of theology for a pastime. They were people who had made a great discovery. They had had a real experience and they were trying to write it down so that others should know about it; much as a man fighting his way through a desert, who has found a secret spring on which his very life was nourished, writes down the information, lest in the drift of things the spring should get choked and buried, and for want of it, those who are to carry

on his battle and take his place should fall back or perish by the way. What did they mean by the Holy Spirit ?

In the first place they meant by it God's power of immediate contact with our life. That was the great thing which the Spirit signified for them. Before this, God had been somewhat far away. He had been high above them ; out of their reach : separated from them by a gulf which could not be bridged. The very form of the temple in which the Jews worshipped suggested the aloofness of God. There was an outer court for the worshippers, and a chamber within where the ark was kept, a Holy of Holies which no man dared enter ; and before it, a veil proclaiming the awful mystery of the God for ever remote. When Jesus came, another view of God dawned on their minds : He had come down beside them. They felt that as they stood in the company of Jesus ; they began to realize that somehow they were in the presence of God. That was part of the sublime experience which made them call Jesus the Son of God. He made them feel the God they knew. But still in a measure God was outside. And when Christ was not near, He seemed very far away. There was one awful period when for three days Jesus was in His grave, and they felt a sickening sense of loneliness as if God had disappeared.

But now they knew that God was in contact with them, was within their very souls. They did

not need any kind of outside help. They could go out and face the world and be confident that God would back them up ; that somehow His very Spirit was in living touch with theirs, deep down in the place where the mind did its thinking, and the heart its loving, and courage and hope had their secret spring. Within them there was a fountain from which sprang up everything that was good. They had known this inner fountain before now, rising up suddenly into their lives, sending through their whole being a wave of love or kindness or courage. They had also known it dry up so that they became weak and useless. But *now* they knew that this fountain ran right down into the being of God, and that somehow He was there within them by His Spirit, active and loving and gracious, able to make new men of them, able to revive their courage and faith so that they could face anything. That was what the Spirit meant to them—the assurance of contact with God within their own souls. It was one of the greatest discoveries of life. It was like the discovery which Paton made to the natives of the New Hebrides. They wanted water, for the season had been dry and all the streams were useless. Paton began to dig down into the earth. They protested, saying that water always came from above. But he persisted and presently clear water began to rise at the bottom of the well and they discovered that within their own island they were in touch with the springs.

That is what the Spirit meant to the disciples. Within their own lives God had access to them, and they had access to His infinite Spirit.

What a new power it would give us to realize this—that God is within. What a new vitality it would bring to prayer to realize that He does not stand without us but already manifests Himself in our hearts in the very urge that sends us to our knees. What new force it would give to every gracious impulse to realize that it has within it and behind it the springs of God's love. What new strength it would add to every demand of duty or faith, what new meanings to those high thoughts that visit us from time to time and lift our life for the moment to new heights of hope and aspiration, to know that in them and in obedience to them, we are meeting with and yielding to the inexhaustible energy of the Spirit of God. For thus, there in the depths, we are not merely thinking our own thoughts, stirring self-enclosed waters: we are in touch, though perhaps only through narrow channels, with the great ocean whose tides are breaking and swelling in. We are in communion with God. And when we draw apart from the world seeking in solitude to find the truth, it is Him we are seeking, or rather, He who is seeking us.

> Thou Life within my life; thou Self more near;
> Thou veiled Presence, infinitely clear.
> From all illusive shows of sense I flee
> To find my centre and my soul in Thee.

A second thing which the Spirit meant for them was the experience that the Christian life has its roots in an original impulse. It is a living thing which works from the heart—not a mere mechanical copy of a pattern on which we artificially mould our lives. We often speak of Christianity as a way of life, and so it is. It is a way of doing things, a certain code of practices, a style of high living and true thinking. It becomes, by and by, a bundle of habits and shows itself in a certain type of character which we learn to call Christian. But how is that character produced? That is the point. Is it produced merely by a painful and accurate copying of Jesus, sitting down before His portrait as an artist sits down before a picture, and slowly modelling our lives on it line by line and act after act? Or is it produced by getting together a set of rules and regulations out of the New Testament and systematically obeying them? That is how we often think of the Christian life; and that is why it is often such a dreary and unattractive business, and, even with all our efforts, so utterly hopeless. There is nothing so futile as the attempt to imitate Jesus. Even if we could be successful the result would be no more like the original than paper roses are like the garden flowers. The simplest rosebud grown in a garret shames all the artifice and art of man. But that was not how the people of the New Testament thought of the Christian life or experienced it.

There is hardly a word in all the epistles about making Christ a pattern or finding in Him an example. The whole idea of copying Christ in His earthly life is foreign to these pages. There is, in point of fact, after the gospels, very little in the Bible about the actual life of Christ. You would have imagined it would have been full of reminiscences of the story of Jesus, of the things He said, and the things He did, and the little personal touches that light up a figure from the past and are recalled to mind to quicken our love. But Paul was conscious, as they were all conscious, that through Him they possessed a root of life, a spirit alive in their souls, growing up in them, shaping character from within and finding its outlet in a certain way of life and service and in all their attitudes to one another. They found that they could think with His mind and were not slavishly dependent upon His words. They found no need to try to put His message into a set of rules. The life was in them as an original impulse, breaking out in them in a way of feeling and thinking and doing, as the life in a tree breaks out in blossom and fruit when the spring sap stirs in its veins. And so character was a fruit, and service was a fruit, and all that was good in their lives was a fruit, a fruit of the Spirit, which had somehow grown and been awakened to life in them through Him.

Now this is the original thing in Christianity. There are people who are fond of telling us that

there is teaching in other masters and other faiths which is as noble as that in the gospels. There are, for example, whole pages in the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius that read like leaves from the gospels. The statement has truth in it, though that cannot discredit the fact of God which Christianity proclaims. As Whittier says :

> "The white wings of the Holy Ghost
> Stoop, seen or unseen, o'er the heads of all."

And Christianity does us this service that it reveals the full glory of the source from which this truth and goodness spring. But the original thing in Christianity is the power it has to create Christian personalities, to make men think like Jesus, and grow like Jesus, not from the practice of a rigid obedience but from the power of an inward life. Jesus laid down no rules—He communicates a Spirit. He gave no detailed directions for living. He did not even write down a set of principles. He set free a love for Himself and for men which is light and fire within the heart and which shapes people into His likeness. And it is the full possession of this Spirit which is distinctive of Christianity. The gospels call it being "born again"—born of the Spirit. Paul says, "If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of His." And the measure in which we have that Spirit is the measure of the spontaneity and freedom and reality of our Christian life.

There are people who have it : you recognize them apart from their differences of race or temperament or station as of the same spiritual likeness, belonging to the same type : and though they may blunder and make mistakes and have many defects, you feel there is a something in them which irresistibly reminds you of Jesus and touches some chord of music in you of which He alone is the master. There are others whose character is painfully correct,

"faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null."

But you feel that in them there is something wanting. As a critic said of a copied picture : "It is all right, but it just wants *that* !" Just *that* is what in Christianity produces the living impulse, the seed of life, the fire Divine within the heart. And that original life is the experience which the New Testament means by the gift of the Spirit.

Yet again, their thought of the Spirit was the guarantee of progress, of new things, of the changed world, of the living and victorious Church. Christianity does not rest upon a tradition ; it lives in a vital experience, an experience which is ever renewing itself. That power of infinite renewal is what the gift of the Spirit means.

It means, for instance, the discovery and the unfolding of new truth. Jesus said as much. There were things He could not tell His disciples,

but the Spirit would lead them into the secret. It is true that every new spiritual truth into which we have been led has always the look of something which Jesus said or a recovery of something which was in Him, but which had lain dormant till its meaning was revealed. And all new truth will be in harmony with His Spirit. But if there is one thing which the New Testament stands for, it is that the Spirit did not cease to teach or to reveal God's truth to men at the moment when the last word was put to the last epistle. The Spirit means the living mind of God at work in the minds of men, unfolding and enlarging their thoughts, awakening new ideas, revealing new truth. There are secrets we do not know at present, but who is to say that one day even here on earth men will not discover them? We know little about the origin of evil ; but why should we not discover it one day as men hope one day to find out the origin of cancer? There are things about God we do not know, notwithstanding those people who claim to have penetrated into the last corner of His mind about themselves and other people. The nature of God is largely veiled, though not so veiled, thank God, as Mr. Wells and others have pictured it. But who is to set limits to the things which shall be revealed by the Spirit? For the Spirit is the living Mind of God at work.

And the gift of the Spirit means new guidance, fresh light, for the new circumstances we may have

to face. As John Robinson put it in his great sermon to the Pilgrim Fathers on the morning of their setting sail for the New World, "God hath yet more light to break out of His Holy Word." If it were not so, there would be large tracts of life which would be without any light of God at all. There are people, indeed, who take the view that because Christ did not say anything definite about certain problems which confront us to-day, about war for instance, or industry, or poverty, or the housing question, there is therefore no very binding way of duty in these matters and they may safely be kept outside the range of the living conscience. Such matters do not, they claim, touch our relation with Christ. But surely this is to deny the whole New Testament doctrine of the Spirit. Christ said nothing about slavery, but slavery died because the men who fought it believed that they were fighting under the leadership of Christ, and the light by which it became intolerable that a man should put chains upon his brother was a beam from the face of Christ. The Spirit is a living Spirit. His guidance develops with need. He fits His word for conscience to the circumstances. "The messages of God," says Mark Rutherford, "cannot be read through the envelope in which they are enclosed." But when life and its needs tear open the envelope the message of God is there.

And there is, in the promise of the Spirit,

the hope of infinite renewal. The day of revival is not over. Pentecost is only its beginning. For the Spirit is God's infinite power of access to the hearts of men and the possibility of the constant reviving of faith and religion. What form the next revival may take we do not know, though there are finger-posts that suggest the road along which the winds of God will carry us. But the Spirit that made Pentecost, and gave the truth fire, and the message wings, and brought thousands of people to their knees calling Jesus "Lord"—that Spirit lives and His work is going on till the Kingdom is brought in. It is little wonder that the Early Church was filled with a great hope; that they could face anything; that they were not ashamed of the message of Christ; that they believed in a great future. Let us, like them, lift up our hearts. Our God is marching on.

We know there shall dawn a day—
Is it here on this lonely earth, or yonder, worlds away?
Where power comes full in play.

By whatever name we call it, we cannot do without this doctrine of the Spirit. And we certainly cannot do without this experience. How does it come? "Go and wait," said Jesus, giving them directions. "Go and think about Me"; that is the secret. It is when we think about Christ, when we get into His presence, so to speak, and are waiting and willing to be led

and taught and guided and helped, and in that attitude face life, that the Spirit comes. The Gift of the Spirit does not mean the overwhelming of our nature, or the domination of our will. A man is never so active with his will, his mind, his struggle and effort, as when the Spirit is finding a centre in his heart—when he realizes, as did Paul, it is "I, yet not I." And this attitude, quietly receptive and passionately eager, is the deep, deep secret of the Christian life and the Christian victory.

Hast thou a cunning instrument of play?
'Tis well, but see thou keep it bright,
And tuned to primal chords:
For when He comes thou knowest not,
Who shall say "These virginals are apt," and try
a note,
And sit and make such music of delight
That men shall stand and listen by the way,
And all the room with heavenly music float.

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST THE CHURCH'S SUPREME NEED

By Professor James Alex. Robertson, D.D.
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"*Lo! I am with you always.*"—Matt. xxviii, 20.

"*When they were awake they saw His glory.*"—Luke ix, 32.

"*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*"—Eph. v, 14.

The Presence of Christ the Church's Supreme Need

My purpose in putting these portions of Scripture together to-day ought to be apparent when I say that my subject is the *Presence of Christ as the supreme need of the hour for the Church.*

If you were to ask me to name the two most fundamental facts of the Christian faith, I should answer: God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself when He lived and wrought and died in Palestine. Christ is alive; the Spirit, the personality of Jesus is alive and present in His Church now—seeking through her to win the world for His Kingdom.

"Lo! I am with you all the days": if that is really so, how do we venture to make the assertion that the supreme *need* of the hour in the life of the Church is the presence of Christ?

May I at once remind you of one of the greatest pictures in the whole of the New Testament? It is a dark house showing dimly through the swiftly gathering gloom. And on the threshold, in a listening attitude, stands a radiant Form. With upraised hand He knocks, and listens, and then knocks again. Patient

the face is, and gentle, but infinitely sad. Sometimes I think that in all the Bible there is no picture so ravishingly winsome and tender. Sometimes I think there is no picture so charged with rebuke, so vocal with Divine Judgment. For, see ! whose is that white and startled face, that looks out, with a drowsy trouble in the eyes, through the dark window's curtains drawn for a moment aside ? It is the spirit of a Church that had fallen sound asleep. Inside, the room was cold and dark. The table was unfurnished. The ashes on the hearth were spent.

What a world of tragic possibilities that picture thrusts before your eyes and mine ! Christ present *always* with His Church on earth : but it makes all the difference in the world whether He is within the house, sitting at the table, breaking bread with us, our Guest, our Host; or whether He has been compelled by our unfaithfulness to stand on the threshold knocking at the door.

Is Christ within, or left standing at the door to-day ? Is He perchance within, but not as our Host, not even as our honoured Guest ? Does He mingle in the company, unknown, unrecognized, neglected and ignored ? Is He a Stranger kept waiting in the hall, while we have forgotten that He has called ? He *is* present—that much is very sure. But do we realize His presence ? Are we awake to see His glory ? Are we spiritually conscious of all that His presence means ? Is His nearness so certain,

so vivid and so real to us that we speak to Him confidingly, as a man talks with his friend? From that tremendous personality there have flowed time and again into human life streams of healing, quickening, uplifting—flood-tides which have changed the course of history, which have refreshed and renewed the face of the dry, parched land. Why is it not so to-day? When Balaam stood on the heights and looked down on the camp of Israel his tongue was held from cursing. He said:

> How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?
> How shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied?
> * * * * *
> The Lord his God is with him,
> And the shout of a king is among them:
> * * * * *
> How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,
> And thy tabernacles, O Israel!

But to-day all the so-called prophets of the world are standing on the heights looking down at the Church, and their curses are unrestrained. Why? Because they hear no more the rustle and the shouting as the King passes through the camp. Yes, that is the only thing that will silence the criticism of the Church to-day: the realized presence of the Lord in her midst again, making her rise up to do His service with a new conviction, a new consciousness of power, a new assurance of hope, a contagious blithesomeness that will draw the wondering world. That is the supreme need of the hour.

Not that we need pay too much heed to what the worldly-minded critic has to say. It is enough to mark the fact that he *is* speaking. There is only one Critic who has the right to be heard by the Church; and that is the Church's Master and Lord. And He speaks to us through our own consciences. His Spirit is striving to bring us once again face to face with the truth. And what is the confession which we have to make to ourselves to-day?

Are we not conscious that much of the old radiancy of faith and trust has faded from the face of Christ's Bride? Are we not suffering, in some quarters at least, from a sense of disillusionment, a sense of impotence? And is it not true that it is because the certitude, the assurance of His presence has grown somewhat dim and faint? We have not held fast to our Head. For one reason or other an estrangement has fallen between us and our Lord. And the fault is certainly not His. He is in the midst, waiting and longing, as He ever waits and longs, to bless. The fault is ours. We will not say we have thrust Him out to the door again. In many a corner of the Church, and in more than one heart in every congregation, His presence is recognized with joy. He is still inside, a guest perhaps among the company, but all eyes are not constantly towards Him. He might be dead for all the attention multitudes nominally within the Church are paying to Him. There is a widespread indifference in the Church to-day to the

simple fact, nay the tremendous fact that Jesus is alive. Jesus *is* alive ! But we are concerned about other matters, busy about mere externalities. And He is left to wander through the rooms of the house, sad, and slighted, and alone. We are careful and troubled about many things. We have chosen the way of Martha rather than the way of Mary. Many of these interests are doubtless praiseworthy and lovable : we would be the last to write them down as sins. Nevertheless, one thing is needful. We are not sitting as we ought to sit at the feet of the Master, listening for His voice, waiting for His word.

What would the realized presence of Christ mean for us ? Some time ago a traveller wandered in the Holy Land. " One of my afternoons in Nazareth," he says, " I had walked by myself out of the town to the valley overhung by the so-called ' Mount of Precipitation,' a glen mottled with rock and patches of greening corn. ' The Christ may have sometimes gone this way,' I thought, ' along this very track, through these meadows of dry, winter grass. Ah ! He that is at the Right Hand came from a workshop yonder at dawn and walked, stood, knelt on this sod, where I, and as I, to-day stand and kneel. . . . ' Then something happened like nothing I have known. A spell seized me. Not a rapture, not a lifting up : it was Heaven that came down to me, came near me, came upon me. ' The Divine Reality once was here,' under my breath I said, ' here upon these grasses of the field, the

blessed feet treading them as my foot treads them, the eyes resting on that same hillside before mine, the hands clasped in prayer to the Father in heaven, hands that would presently be at work at a carpenter's bench in the village street behind me.' "

Can you and I, brothers, not catch a far-off whisper of the awe that fell upon that traveller? Jesus had been just a simple peasant workman in a little highland village of Galilee, a human figure with horny hands, and sun-tanned face, passing through that somewhat featureless landscape. And yet what a difference it made to multitudes that Jesus once lived in their midst. Hard hearts, embittered lives, abandoned women, tired folk and broken, looked in His face and saw there a light so winsome that they came, they could not tell why, to unburden to Him all their care and shame. And it was the sweetest relief they had ever known on earth—just to tell it all to Him. And proud men, wealthy men, men of culture, aristocrats in the land, men who thought themselves the essence of goodness, came with great questions bursting from their hearts, questions they hid from the world, questions they hardly dared to ask of themselves; and they found themselves pouring them out unrestrainedly into His ear; and hearing them answered, as though these questions were a prayer that had won a response from the silent heavens. And often, in many another scene, with this simple workman in the midst, there were tremblings

and shrinkings and tears and shame. Men drew away back from Him, as if His presence were the judgment-seat of God. And excitement spread over the face of the land. It was all so simple and wonderful. His voice was the breath of health, blowing from the land of Immortality. And something within the hearts of the people began to stir and wake. "Never man spake like this," they said. He looks down into our souls, they thought. He looks up into the face of God. We can see the light of the glory of God on His face. God is near. God is passing. The Lord hath visited His people. Glory to God for these times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord!

It was to them as wonderful as it would be to us to-day to hear strange news breaking out of the skies from Heaven. He was the shadow of a great rock in a weary land—a land where dead souls wandered, crushed by superstitions, broken and embittered by injustice, oppression and wrong, the sky all blotted by the tangled growth of the Rabbis' traditions, the ways all blown over by the desert sands of their weary rules and maxims; and all the longings of the soul for the presence of God dried like the brooks in a summer's drought—until this Man came. And lo, the nightmare was broken by a beam of heavenly splendour. The great God had burst the awful bars of spiritual death that had shut Him out. The people heard God calling in the looks and tones and gestures of this Man. And

they cried, "Lord, to whom can we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Ah, when they came to Him—those Galilean crowds—worn with doubts, tired of the dusty answers of the scribes, and heard Him say, "It is so. I say it unto you," their doubts vanished, their fears fell at their feet as dead. It has been said the value of a religion lies in the pledge it can give of the presence of God. The noblest, the most convincing pledge—God's own pledge—of the presence of God in human life is Jesus of Nazareth. He is still our pledge.

You listen to me repeating these familiar things to-day, and your heart is full of wishes, wishes, wistful yearnings. The story is so old and faded. You say, "Well, but——" Shall I try to finish your unfinished sentence?

> Now He is dead! Far hence he lies
> In the lorn Syrian town;
> And on His grave, with shining eyes,
> The Syrian stars look down.

And as I repeat the verse, all the soul within you rises up in protest to deny the statement. Look again at the story. Let me take you to one of the closing scenes. It is the porch of the gate of a stately mansion-house. A grey dawn is breaking, and a cock is crowing near at hand. A man is there with head and shoulders bowed. He is weeping like to break his heart. He has just denied his Master, caught His look of infinite reproach, seen Him pass on to receive sentence.

An hour or two thereafter came the Cross. Try to imagine this poor craven heart's distraction, through the night and through the day, and through the night again. Between him and his base denial rose that grim, relentless Cross. "Oh, to meet Him, to hear His voice again, to have it all out with Him! But the lips are lying cold and white and still in the grave. Dead? No, no, He cannot be dead! Speak, speak to me, Lord!" And as he wandered in the garden of the tomb something unutterably blessed and wonderful happened to him. What it was precisely we do not know, save that the Lord had made His presence known to him. That is all we are told. But we can guess at the outskirts of it. There as he lay, and wept, hiding his face in the grass, he grew aware that he was not alone. And a voice, the dear voice for which he longed, said distinctly enough for his heart at least to hear, "Thou art forgiven, Peter—loosed from all: go and strengthen thy brethren." And round him and within him a great peace fell. Jesus was alive. He had felt the radiance of His forgiving touch. It was on him still. He would fain have wandered away to be alone for a while with his happy secret. But he remembered the word of his Lord. And back he came to the upper room; and when he broke in on them, and when they saw his radiant face, so incredibly changed, they were filled with astonishment; and at once he answered their breathless questions by blurting out the secret,

" Jesus is alive. He is with me now. I know. I am for ever sure. Blessed be God who hath begotten me again to a living hope by the raising up of Jesus ! Your weeping and despair

> I hear, and to myself I smile,
> For Christ talks with me all the while.

Your sorrow is all a dream. Wake, wake, and believe, and you, too, will realize that He is here ! " Then, as they knelt in awe to pray,

> . . . through the mid-complaint of their confession,
> Then, through the pang and passion of their prayer,
> Leaps with a start the shock of His possession,
> Thrills them and touches, and the Lord is there !

And so it went on until that crowning hour of ecstasy at Pentecost, when all the company became filled with the spiritual presence of the risen Lord. And from that place they went out to stir Jerusalem to its depths. Thousands believed : " Jesus is alive ! He is at the right hand of Power ! This which ye see in us is proof of it. It was not possible that He should be holden of death."

And from that city they went forth over the length and breadth of the dying civilization of the Græco-Roman world. That was the first great coming again of Christ after the Resurrection, the first realization of His presence with power. Many a time has He visited the world since then. His presence is the greatest spiritual fact with which our souls can come into con-

tact. Because when here on earth He stood so close to God, because His life was so perfectly adjusted to the Unseen, because every moment He felt the warmth of the Divine breath, the beating of the Divine heart, because He walked all His life long in the consciousness of the Divine Presence, His personal life, victoriously surviving death, has ever since poured streams of power into the life of the world. The Resurrection may be "the land where the great mists lie, but it is the land whence the great rivers flow." Every revival, every reformation, every uprising of a down-trodden principle of the kingdom He planted, to take its stern but glorious revenge, has been a fresh proof of the Resurrection. He is not dead. He is alive. He is here. But because of our faithlessness, our blindness, our sins of enmity, bitterness, censoriousness, self-righteousness, because we are too busy with a multitude of external things, because our spirits are not disengaged enough, because we are blocking up all the avenues of His access to the world, we do not realize His presence. We are His instruments and mediums, but He cannot get through. We are His doors of access to the world. He is longing to come again with power. But the doors are barred with pride and doubt. Can we not hear Him knocking patiently on the other side?

What must we do? What must we do (1) to realize His presence first of all in ourselves as individuals? We must turn in on ourselves

again. It is not the excitement of the crowds that is going to bring the Lord Christ down. As a nation, we have been living too long on the surface of life. In the Church we have been covering too long the poverty of our faith by a babble of religious small-talk. We want to get alone with ourselves in the presence of God. And in that solemn interview with ourselves we must remember the searching eyes of the Spirit of Christ are on us, lest we deal too leniently with ourselves. Let us listen to all this inner unrest, this dissatisfaction and deep discontent, this inward whispering that all is not well, this longing for the old spring of gladness—longing for a fresh baptism of power. What means it all? It is the sound of the patient hand, knocking at the door. Let Him in! Make a fresh beginning with Him, in prayer, in penitence and lowliness of mind. And He will make a fresh beginning with us.

And then what more must we do (2) to realize Christ's presence in the Church? The first essential for that is this. We have got to learn all over again the true secret of Christian fellowship. Not in big conferences. We come into the presence of the crowds not to discover truth, but to proclaim it, and have our hearts confirmed by it. But it is the secret of the quiet gatherings of the two or three we need to learn again. For it is there men come to discover truth, to wait on God, to wait for God, to pray, to receive, to glimpse new visions, to make fresh adventures

of exploration into the unsearchable riches of the vast heart of God.

Long ago, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another."

> We shut our hearts up nowadays,
> Like some old music-box that plays
> Unfashionable airs.

If by God's Spirit we could learn to break the frost of our close reserve about things unseen; if we could learn to meet with the two or three, it may be not always to say only what we believe, nor yet to say what we think we ought to believe; if we came in absolute candour to tell each other our misgivings and doubts, yea, even to voice that old, sad, broken-hearted cry, "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel"; but always if we came to pray, with penitent prayer, waiting prayer, seeking prayer, prayer even in silence when our yearning passes beyond the reach of words, surely our hearts would begin to burn within us, for lo! He would be talking with us by the way. In this breaking of the bread of life our faithful Lord would make Himself known. "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst to bless." And we would discover again that faith had still its Olivet, and love its Galilee, yea, and prayer its Pentecost.

And what (3) finally must we do to make Christ's presence known to all the world? Would it not follow upon what we have urged?

It is not more organization the Church needs. It is Power, the Spirit's Power, the Power of the living, active presence of Christ. It is not new methods, in the first place. The Power would forge these for itself. The Church is cursed with over-organization. Like a great machine it goes clanking, grinding on sometimes when the motive-power has been turned off, without heart to go on, without will to stop. We want to have the broken connexion made good again. We want to get the fire of the Spirit —Pentecostal fire—rekindled on the hearth. That alone will bring the people, the lost sheep, back to the house of God. It is the glimmer of firelight through the windows that draws the benighted wanderer home. If the house remain dark and cold, what matter though it be swept and garnished ? It is only devils—of bad temper and strife and suspicion and jealousy and fear—that return to hold high revel in such a place.

But if we become as little children again, conscious that we have missed our way, anxious to own our poverty of spirit, and to wait with empty hands and open hearts to receive, we will begin to realize the presence of Christ within, and the world will begin to take knowledge of us that we have been, and are, with Jesus. Men will look on the Church as they looked on St. Francis of Assisi and his shining company : they will see it "fragrant with a wondrous aspect." And the power that this poor, worn and spent world needs will begin to flow into

human life again. Christ will become recognized as the Healer, the Peace-maker, the Lord and Prince of life, ushering in the day of His Kingdom.

It is coming, very surely coming. There are signs of it everywhere, not only in the Church but in the world. The world's great writers, poets, dreamers are proclaiming that it is a Christ-haunted world. They can't get away from Him. They are coming back to His feet to ask Him all the most terrible questions of life. The day of a new appearing, another of the days of the Son of Man is most certainly on the way.

'Tis coming up the steep of time,
And our old world is growing brighter.
We may not see its dawn sublime,
But high hopes make the heart beat lighter.
Our dust may slumber underground,
When it awakes the world with wonder;
But we have felt it gathering round,
Have heard its voice of distant thunder:
'Tis coming! Yes, 'tis coming!

Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

Amen

THE SELF-EVIDENCE OF PENTECOST

By Hubert L. Simpson, M.A.
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"*Every man heard them speak in his own language.*"—Acts ii, 6.

The Self-Evidence of Pentecost

When the Firth of Forth was bridged the engineers did not project their great design from one side only. While those on the north bank were trying to reach the south, a no less earnest effort was made from the opposite side to join with the other. And then, by a fortunate circumstance of nature, aiding, as it would appear, the ambitions and desires of both, they were able to meet and to effect a permanent union through the help of the island which lies between.

This reciprocation of effort and desire plays a vital part in the bridging of the seen and the unseen. The father and his erring son in the parable were able to meet in virtue of a common desire on the part of each, followed by action so soon as action was possible. "I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven": but can we believe that he would have seen what he did if God had not also seen the walls of the church rising up from John out of earth?

Divine revelation is not a one-sided bridge-building, coming towards us out of the mist on

the further shore. The seeking God is met by the searching soul ; and often nature, as it were, seems to aid the work and effort of grace, affording some definite experience, like a steadfast and chartable island in the ebb and flow of immaterial things, by means of which the union between the visible and invisible is consummated and made permanent. Speech on these great themes would have no meaning, much less reality, if it were not that " every Christian soul has actually discovered the Divine Trinity in his own experience. In the search after knowledge, the pursuit of art, or the energetic striving of enterprise, he has found inspiration, enthusiasm, and consecration of these departments of human life only in the sense of a mysterious indwelling and assisting presence—the Holy Spirit."

The first sermon preached in the Christian Church was a sermon having the Holy Spirit for its text, and the preacher found no difficulty in expounding his subject to a popular and nondescript audience. It did not for one moment seem to St. Peter's hearers that he was preaching over their heads or dealing with an abstruse theological dogma when he spoke to them of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's presence and power were just the most obvious thing in their experience. The apostle could speak of the Holy Spirit and His manifestation as " this, which ye now see and hear." Three times over the fact is emphasized that what so astonished

and delighted the casual audience which came together on that first Whitsunday was the fact that each man heard the truth proclaimed "in his own language." It was something conveyed to them in terms and expressions with which they were entirely familiar. There was not a touch of anything foreign or strange in what the Christian witnesses were saying.

Can we say as much of the preaching of evangelical truth to-day? Do the doctrines and testimonies of the Christian preachers affect those to whom they are preached like the singing of a well-known folk-song in their mother-tongue? Is it not rather too often the case that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in particular is surrounded by an air of mystery, if not, indeed, of unreality? The first thing which struck those who heard Christian preaching under the influence of the Holy Spirit was not the piquancy of novelty, nor so much the power of the Holy Spirit, as just the intelligibility of the whole thing.

Now this spontaneous testimony is, one feels, in sharp and amazing contrast to the kind of untutored criticism that would be passed by the man literally in the street, as on the first Pentecost. He is most conscious, so he tells us, of the unintelligibility of the whole doctrine. He is apt to taunt the Christian preacher with setting forth "cold Christs and tangled Trinities." He has not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Spirit, in the sense of a present Comforter or

Strengthener. He does not even know whether to speak of the third manifestation of the Divine character as "He" or "it." Is it any wonder that the hosts of the Lord move in such straggling formation, and with such seemingly halting steps go forth to battle, when the trumpet gives an uncertain sound? In *Lavengro* Borrow describes the almost magical effect that followed the utterance of certain sounds by a rough Irish smith when speaking to a horse. "He uttered a word which I had never heard before, in a sharp, pungent tone. The effect upon myself was somewhat extraordinary, a strange thrill ran through me; but with regard to the cob it was terrible; the animal forthwith became like one mad, and reared and kicked with the utmost desperation." Then the smith "uttered another word in a voice singularly modified, but sweet and almost plaintive; the effect of it was as instantaneous as the other, but how different!—the animal lost all its fury and became at once calm and gentle." If such effects can follow the addressing even of a dumb animal "in its own language," how much more swift and telling would be the effect of allowing the Spirit to move men through a medium they could understand and to which they could respond!

Now although it is only a shallow mind which would expect that the transcendent truths of our spiritual experience can be altogether set forth in ways from which all element of mystery is

eliminated, yet one does not make the waters of spiritual truth deeper by merely making them muddy. We should be chary and suspicious of any statement of the vital truths of our souls' salvation which does not call for at least some mental as well as moral effort on our part. "In mystery the soul abides," and when you are speaking of these things you cannot be expected to deal meanly with them, either in language or in thought. As Dr. Dale used to say, "though infinitely mysterious, the revelation of the one God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, fulfils the profoundest, the richest, and the noblest conception of the Divine Life." But where God feeds us with the loaves of the little lad we do not honour Him or satisfy any more the hunger of our souls by demanding mysterious manna. St. Paul had to warn his hearers against cherishing the delusion that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was in inverse ratio to the intelligibility of the process of enlightenment. Then, as with so many to-day, spirituality was identified with aloofness from the world in which men live. The thought of the Divine Spirit was apt to be associated with vagaries of religious experience which are wild, extravagant, and abnormal; with emotional excitement rather than with clear thinking. It was this tendency which St. Paul had to combat when he pled for comprehensible preaching against utterances of which no man could make anything; and

when he insisted that the evidences of the Spirit are desirable things like love, joy, and peace.

The doctrine of the Trinity and of the Holy Spirit was arrived at and formulated by the Church, not by the way of philosophic speculation on the nature and being of God, but by the way of immediate spiritual experience. You can never go wrong when you say, "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." On that first Pentecost the Holy Spirit was responsible for a Gospel preaching which was at once universal in its appeal and perfectly comprehensible. In the audience there were many nationalities represented. There were oriental mystics from the lands of secret lore; Greeks, with their hereditary philosophic turn of mind; Egyptians, with their heavy, sand-clogged musings upon life and death; Romans, with imperial vision and practical politics. They differed utterly in outlook and upbringing. Yet every man of them, listening to the apostles, heard a message which met his habit of thought and disturbed his conscience.

This is the great fact which the Church joyfully celebrates this Whitsunday, that God has communicated Himself to men in ways that they can understand. Here, in the story of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the dominant note is not that of a mystical pronouncement but of a readily received communication. The Holy

Ghost is God speaking to each man in his own language. The Oriental mystic who heard the apostles speak has his counterpart in the man of to-day who with immediacy can catch the intimations which come from the unseen. The Greek amongst us, with philosophic bent of mind and delicate perception and love of beauty, finds that the Holy Spirit, if he will but listen, is addressing him also directly in his own language, through this love of beauty. For the scientist, with his Roman-like devotion to law and order, it is in no strange tongue that the voice of God comes to him. And for those among us of a kind of Egyptian, sphinx-like reserve, who never utter much of their mind upon these great questions, but who are guided by an innate sense of fairness, governed, as the ancient Egyptians were governed, by a conviction that the souls of men will be weighed in a scale as unswerving as Osiris's own, it is not in unfamiliar accents that the tones of the Holy Spirit come to them.

These are days in which we are being reminded over and over again that the world has escaped from the shackles of convention and authority. The preacher is being told on all sides that men will face actual facts, but that they will not any longer swallow accepted theories. "All the professional conventions, veils that have long hidden reality from men, are being torn down to-day. The days of precedent, prejudice, routine, and formal orthodoxy are over. In so far as our

language, or our manner, or our subjects, have been professional or artificial, we must change them and be natural. Nay more, some of what we have taken for settled truth, arranged and classified and systematized, may turn out upon severe and candid examination to be mere imagination, corresponding to no existing set of realities which we can actually know. This also must be surrendered, and exchanged for a message with some blood in it, recognizable as a thing humanly true." But does the demand of the age for freedom not carry with it more than the demanders realize? It means that a new freedom is granted also to the Holy Spirit. What if our formulae and precedents, our prejudice and orthodoxy, have been acting as so many swaddling bands fettering and limiting the working of the Holy Spirit? Evidently it was not difficult for people who passed as religious, zealous pilgrims to the Temple at Jerusalem, to dodge the demands of righteousness when the message was droned to them in ecclesiastical phrase and time-worn ritual. It was when they heard the voice of God speaking conviction to them "in their own language" that we read that they first were "pricked in their heart." This age which so loudly demands freedom and reality and unconventionality is going to set the Holy Spirit free as well. The gain is not all going to be on one side. It was open formerly to one resisting conviction and the striving of the Holy Spirit to say

that he could make nothing of such expressions as "washed in the blood of the Lamb," or "vicarious sacrifice," or "atonement" and "regeneration." Such an one said, and said with perhaps a good deal of truth, that that kind of talk was to him a foreign language. But he does know the meaning of brotherhood and social responsibility, of self-control and self-development, of commercial morality and business rectitude ; and if he has got a heart at all it will not be so hard for the point of the two-edged sword to prick it in days to come. At least he cannot pretend that he is ignorant of his native tongue, and the Holy Spirit is able to speak in those accents as well as the loftier language of theology and philosophy.

We are all apt to be deceived by idols of one kind and another, too prone to revere the work of man's making rather than God the Creator, who is blessed for evermore. When Mahmoud, one of the conquerors of India, entered one of the Hindu temples, he was besought to spare an idol regarded as specially sacred. He at once hacked it down with his sword, and from the shattered head there poured forth a shimmering shower of diamonds of incalculable value. So into our conventional life and tradition-bound society there comes from time to time, as there has come in the past few years, a great, sharp, slashing sword, hewing remorselessly through all that we have considered dearest, and sought

most eagerly to defend. And as the various idols of the soul have gone, the hidden wealth of the Spirit has been disclosed.

"To every man," says Stevenson, "there comes at times a consciousness that there blows through all the articulations of his body the wind of a Spirit not wholly his." The only unforgivable sin is that of the man who closes the windows of his being to the incoming of this viewless power. The unforgivableness is not arbitrary, it is rooted in the nature of things. For we gradually poison ourselves if we breathe nothing but our own vitiated atmosphere. And if a man do but open door and window the Guest comes in and makes His abode—as the bloom of health upon the soul and the perpetual inspiration of the life.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.

POWER AND ITS SECRET

By E. S. Woods, M.A., Hon. C.F.
Hon. Canon of Ely

"*Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power.*"

Colossians i, 11.

Power and its Secret

I

Someone once said that the New Testament is full of unexploded dynamite. That is a true statement. Even after all these centuries Christians have so far only touched a minute portion of the Divine energy that is available for them. Attempts to understand and take hold of and utilize that energy have been spasmodic. The first generation of Christian disciples knew the secret of using that power, and for us who come after them it is a profitable and indeed a necessary duty to investigate what they did and how they did it.

Their experience of "power" began on the day of Pentecost. The happenings in the Upper Room in Jerusalem that day may seem a little obscure, but there is no doubt whatever that to those assembled therein there did come then and there a new experience of God which made itself felt in them and through them, both on that very day, and all through the remainder of their lives. It is not strange that things should have happened thus. It may well be that the

departure of Jesus from the earth as to His visible, physical presence, terminated the limitations of the Incarnation and, as it were, involved a new release of spiritual energy. Perhaps that is what St. John means by saying the Spirit could not be given until Christ was "glorified." Of course, this must not be taken to mean that the Spirit of God had been inoperative before. The source of all goodness, truth and beauty is always at work in men's hearts everywhere. But Pentecost surely marked a new stage in God's dealings with men. Just as the Cross was, in a certain sense, a fresh opening of the floodgates of eternal love, so Pentecost meant a new release of Divine energy throughout the universe. As a recent theological writer has justly observed, "Pentecost was the manifestation, on a scale and in a fashion previously unexampled, of a spiritual force which had never been absent from the world and never been passive in the hearts of men." In that room on that day that little group of disciples did, unquestionably, become acutely aware of God's love and God's presence in a new way. It was no new thing in God. But it was a very new thing in man. The light had always been there; man had now gained a new faculty for seeing it. Pentecost was, so to say, an unexampled cleaning of the human window; not more light given, but more light let in.

It is natural enough that such an unprece-

dented spiritual happening should be attended by unusual psychic phenomena, such as the "speaking with tongues." Such phenomena have occurred since then at times and on occasions of deep religious emotion or religious revival. From the side of God's purpose it was surely vital that at this moment of history, when His revelation of Himself through the incarnate Jesus was just completed, men should quite firmly and decisively grasp the truth of God's utter availability. It is not therefore surprising that the coming of this tremendous conviction should be ratified by phenomena which could appeal to the senses.

II

When we go on to ask how this great conviction was tested and fulfilled in the experience of the first generation of Christians, we find the answer written for us in one of the most remarkable documents of all human history, that document which is called in the Bible the Acts of the Apostles. Let us interrogate this document in order that we may unravel the secret of that "power" which was so characteristic of the first generation of disciples. Before He left the earth, Jesus had definitely promised that the Spirit would bring them "power." At Pentecost they had its first instalment. How did this "power" show itself in their lives and in the

common life of the little Christian community during the years that followed ?

Any complete answer to that question would carry us beyond the scope of a single sermon. Let us, therefore, out of the wonderful mass of detail that we are given in the Acts and in the Pauline letters, pick out what seem to be one or two of the salient characteristics of their Christian life, one or two of the ways in which their new-found Divine energy expressed itself. Two of these seem to stand out. The first we might, perhaps, call *moral effectiveness*. That phrase sounds rather dull and philosophical; but the thing, as they did it, was very far from dull. It was startling, wonderful, adventurous, and, in particular, it was new. Their Master, Jesus, had shown them a new way of living—the way of trust, the way of friendship, the way of love, and that not for a selected circle, but as the universal rule to include everybody. He had talked to them about it, He had told them stories about it, and, above all, in the carpenter's shop, among the fishermen by the lake, on the road and in the towns, and at last in those awful hours when He was done to death, He had shown them by His own doings what His law of love looked like and what it involved. And then He said to them, in effect, Go and do likewise : go and show men everywhere that this idea of all human beings as brothers and sisters in the family of God is a practicable thing. Of course, they wanted to

do what He said. Pentecost fanned the flame of that desire into a white-hot passion, and gave them the knowledge and the strength to translate that passion into deed. They at once started putting it into practice among themselves. They found themselves in a new relationship. There was no question of forming a society. In virtue of their love of Christ, they actually were a band of brothers belonging to one family. It was a new experience and they had to coin a new word to describe it. They called it the κοινώνια, "the fellowship"; the Acts document is full of references to the "fellowship" of the early Church. Their sense of fellowship was so strong that they pooled their possessions and made a first experiment in Christian communism. And there can be little doubt that this strong fellowship was the main lever in all their evangelistic work. They were ready and courageous with their sermons, with their talks to any who would come and listen; but then, as now, the converting power which they wielded was doubtless to be found still more in what they did and the way they lived than in what they said. You cannot bully or frighten or trick men into the Kingdom of God; but when you try to love them into it they find it quite difficult to keep outside.

A second striking feature of the life and work of the early Christians, directly traceable to that fresh spiritual endowment which came to them at Pentecost, was *the confidence, the buoyancy, the*

enthusiasm which never left them, however uphill their tasks or perilous their situations. Just as a lover sees everything and everybody bathed in a kind of transfiguring radiance, so these men and women, possessed by the Spirit of the Living Christ, found themselves bubbling over with a joy and a happiness which they longed to share with everybody else. The atmosphere in which they move is the keen air of a spring morning; their outlook is that expressed in Browning's well-known lines:

> "God's in His heaven—
> All's right with the world!"

Think of the apostles arraigned before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, their very lives in peril, going out from the court, their one thought being what joy it was to be allowed to suffer anything for the Jesus whom they loved and served. Think of St. Paul in the prison at Philippi, his feet in the stocks, his poor body lacerated with the terrible Roman scourging, and he is discovered by the jailer singing hymns. Think of St. Peter, hunted and persecuted like the rest and shortly (according to a well-founded tradition) to give up his life for the cause, writing a letter to his Christian friends and telling them, as their most obvious duty and immediate privilege, to rejoice in Jesus Christ with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

The more you study the story of these early

days of Christianity, the more you are struck by this wonderful *élan* of the little Christian society. They seemed to realize and to carry out so exactly what the Master had meant when He told them that men might have life and might have it more abundantly. There is nothing small or petty or timid about their point of view or their actions : there is no halting, or hesitancy, or half-measures. A characteristic and very favourite word of St. Paul's in his letters to the newly-formed Christian Churches is the word " abound " : " We beseech you, brethren, that ye would abound more and more." It is a large experience that they are entering. It is a complete life they have got hold of. It is a certain remedy for sin that they have found, a sure antidote to suffering, a full redemption, and that not for the select few, but for all who are willing to receive it. It is this exuberant life which is the secret of their astounding evangelistic power and evangelistic success. I should like to quote here a passage from a remarkable address by Dr. W. R. Maltby at a great student gathering a few years ago, which finely expresses this side of early Christian experience. " There is nothing in literature," he says, " like the reiterated attempt in St. Paul's letters to express the strength and volume of this surging life that made the early Christians more than victorious. In the effort to tell it, he strains the language and mangles the grammar, so that it takes Dr. Moffatt weeks to execute the

necessary repairs. But even more significant than what he says is what he and others among those first Christians did. Absurdly unequipped as they were, with nothing but their message and their joy, they challenged those tremendous odds, and felt the humour of their doing so. "God chose," they said, "the weak things of the world to shame the strong, and the silly things to confound the wise, and the nonentities to make an end to the mal-entities." They confronted the social cleavages of their day, Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free, and declared all disabilities annulled in Christ, conferred on all alike the freedom of the City of God, and saw their word take effect. They moved among cities which stank of moral corruption, and had to find a Gospel for men polluted by devouring passions, but they did not advise such people to try and creep back to something like decency again. Their message is a very different one. It is as though they rose from the Father's table and ran out without their hats to fetch this their brother in, just as he was, assured that if he would but come, he would find everything to make him clean and put him in his right mind. The decisiveness of St. Paul's strategy in the battle with sin takes your breath away. For every man, however shameful his fall, however terrible his passions or wasted his strength, there is always a splendid option—not a bare escape, but a full tide of obliterating forgiveness, of love and joy

and peace. "There is a new creation whenever a man becomes united to Christ." "Anger, malice, lust, uncleanness, covetousness," he cried, "put them all off"—as though it were a coat. "Put on the new nature. Put on the new mind. Put on the new mood. Put on Christ."

III

And what about to-day? Are there any signs of the Christian society of to-day taking up its own task with the enthusiasm and the buoyancy displayed by those men and women of the first century? That is a question to which every modern Christian ought to give serious consideration. Whatever doubt there may be about the strength to do it, there is no doubt at all about that which needs to be done. It is true that in every generation the Christian society is confronted by the task, from which there is no escape, of sharing its life with the world in which it lives. Sometimes the world outside seems curiously unready to pay any heed, and the Church's evangelistic duty becomes not less urgent but more difficult. At other times the world seems not merely to need, but actually, here and there even consciously, to want what the Church has to give, and the general conditions are such as to facilitate rather than to hinder the Church's work. It is in such a day that we are living. It is probably true to say that never in all history were there so many

people in the world so prepared and so disposed to give heed to the Christian message as is the case to-day, and never in its long story has the Church been confronted by such a gigantic Christian opportunity. The difficult years since the Great War indeed have made it more than ever clear to thoughtful minds that the only satisfactory and permanent basis for human society must be of a spiritual kind, and all the world over there is a wistful turning towards Christianity to see whether that religion can provide what is needed. The world has shrunk into a single neighbourhood; new civilizations are coming to the birth; there is nothing less than a renaissance proceeding in Africa, in India, in the Far East; the life of the nations is fluid and molten. On all sides the doors stand wide open, and the only question is whether the Church is going to have the faith and courage to enter in.

In the face of this golden opportunity it must be said in all honesty that the Church does seem to be stricken with something very like impotence. The Church seems in travail and cannot bring to birth. There is an immense amount of religious activity. No place in Great Britain is without quite a large proportion of churches to the population. The organization of the Church, centrally and locally, has probably never been more efficient than it is now. And yet men and money simply are not forthcoming for God's work at

home and abroad on anything like an adequate scale. Only a day or two before these lines are written, this disastrous shortage of man-power and money-power has been brought home to the conscience of the Church of England at a great and unprecedented gathering in London of three thousand delegates, officially representative of all the dioceses. The new World Call to the Church there presented has made it nakedly plain where we stand. Apart altogether from other Churches, and apart from any question of extension and seizing fresh openings, if the work of the Kingdom overseas to which the Church of England is already committed is to be maintained at a reasonable level of efficiency, there ought to be immediately forthcoming five hundred and fifty-six men and women, and additional money to the amount of £250,000 per annum to support them.

Such a challenge and such a demand are indeed staggering to contemplate. Yet is it any less staggering than the missionary proposition which confronted the early Church, when that tiny handful of men and women set out on the seemingly absurd adventure of converting the Roman Empire? We must look at all the facts, including the fact for which Whitsuntide stands, namely, that the power which was available for the early Christians is available for us also. But how is the Church to get it? In attempting to answer this question it needs to be said quite

frankly, so it seems to me, that many of the petitions for power offered by religious people seem to be ill-considered and often thoroughly unreal. There is no need of frantic beseechings to God to pour out His Spirit, to stretch forth His hand, to bring near His power, and so on. We sometimes seem to pray such prayers as if there was an indefinable something to be sent us from Heaven in an arbitrary fashion and at some future and quite incalculable time. But if what Christ told us of God is true, and if the experience of Pentecost was real, then it surely follows that the almighty power of God is there all the time for any person or group of people who will set about doing what He wants. This is a law to which there is no exception. Power is found in the path of obedience; when, like Jesus, men will walk in the way of the Cross, then the love of God can flow through them unimpeded. God's power, the very power that raised Jesus from the dead, *is at the disposal of any Church that will corporately embark on the Great Adventure* —the adventure of making Jesus really supreme in its own fellowship, the adventure of following His way in a world estranged from Him, the adventure of dying that He may live and reign throughout the globe.

And for ourselves. The Church as a whole, on the large scale, is never going to explore these great possibilities unless and until we of the rank and file in our own humble fashion are

exploring the secret and power in our own lives. Jesus Christ said quite plainly—and what happened at Pentecost confirmed His claim—that if a man will let Him, the Spirit of God will come right inside a human personality so that it becomes in a true sense a habitation and an instrument for God on earth. That is no special mystical experience. It is no esoteric doctrine. It is for ordinary men and women; it is "a religion for the man in the third-class carriage." You and I as Christians dare not be content with any lesser experience than that. It is, of course, chiefly a matter of making room; throwing out what is worthless and futile and inconsistent with Christ's values and making room for something different and something better. Naturally it will mean time and trouble; none of the best things in life is to be had in easy and slipshod fashion. But if we are prepared, by the discipline of thought, by the provision of time and opportunity, by the offering of a repentant heart and mind, to make room for His incoming, He will come without any doubt. Any difficulty there may be is in us and not in Him. He is always utterly willing to come to those who want Him. "God is all round us, a breaking sea of light and love and truth and joy, and all our task is to let Him in."

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